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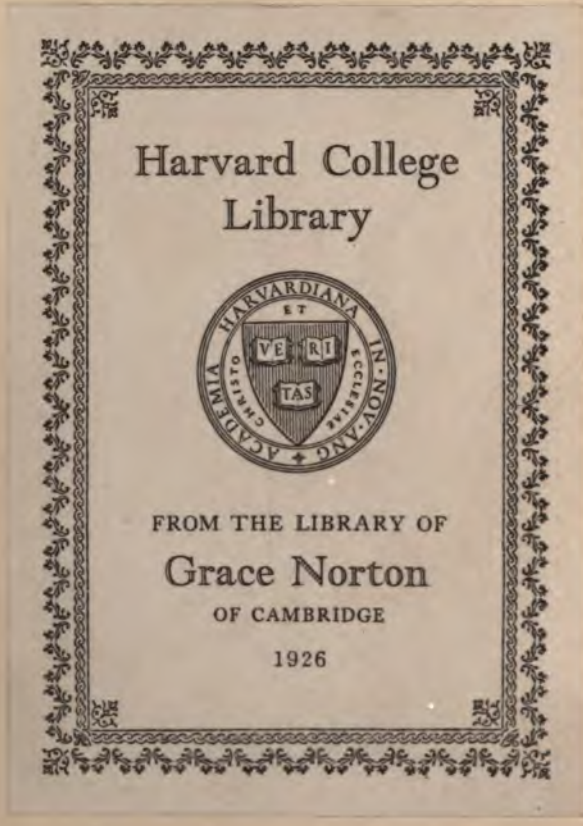

By Charles Eliot Norton

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TRANSLATION OF DANTE'S DIVINA COMMEDIA INTO ENGLISH VERSE [illegible] $1.50

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN & CO.
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

THE DIVINE COMEDY OF DANTE ALIGHIERI

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY
THOMAS WILLIAM PARSONS

WITH A PREFACE BY CHARLES ELIOT NORTON AND
A MEMORIAL SKETCH BY LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1896

Fin 50.1.12

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Sept. 14, 1926

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The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton and Company.

To Anna Parsons and Augusta Barnard
I dedicate this work.

T. W. Parsons, 1867.

PREFACE.[1]

SINCE the foundation of the Dante Society in Cambridge, twelve years ago, we have had to deplore the death of but few of its members. But it is a grievous and remarkable fact that we have lost from our roll the most illustrious names: first, that of our first President, Mr. Longfellow; then, that of our second President, Mr. Lowell; and in the past year that of Dr. Parsons. They were the three most eminent lovers and disciples of Dante in America; three poets who had each devoted a large portion of his life to the study of Dante's work, and contributed as no other scholars have done to diffuse his influence in this country. Our Society has been dignified by their part in it. We cannot hope for future distinction such as their presence has lent to us in the past.

Fifty years ago, a little pamphlet in stiff brown covers was issued in Boston, of which the title page reads: "The first Ten Cantos of the *In-*

[1] Read at a meeting of the Dante Society, May 16, 1893.

ferno of Dante Alighieri. Newly translated into English Verse." It bore no author's name. The translation was preceded by a poem in seven stanzas, "On a Bust of Dante." The poem long since became deservedly familiar to the lovers of poetry. Its opening verses, strong, simple, direct, are worthy of the master who inspired them, and they set the key of the whole poem: —

> "See, from this counterfeit of him
> Whom Arno shall remember long,
> How stern of lineament, how grim
> The father was of Tuscan song.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Faithful if this wan image be,
> No dream his life was, but a fight:
> Could any Beatrice see
> A lover in that anchorite?"

The little book attracted scanty attention, save from a few persons of scholarly taste. Among those who encouraged Dr. Parsons to proceed with his translation, it is pleasant to me to recall, was my father; and almost the earliest of my own associations with Dante are connected with the friendly criticism and discussion between him and the young translator.

As time went on, Dr. Parsons added to his work. Dante was his continual study. But almost twenty-five years had passed since the publication

of the "Ten Cantos" before he printed the complete translation of the "First Canticle of the *Divine Comedy.*" He had greatly revised his original essay, and a comparison of the cantos printed in 1843 with the same cantos as they appeared in the volume of 1867 is interesting as a study of style, and of experiments in translation. The scheme of verse is not changed, but everywhere a firmer hand is felt and a more perfected art is manifest. Nine years later, in 1876, Dr. Parsons published a further portion of his work, under the title of "The *Ante-Purgatorio* of Dante Alighieri. Translated by T. W. Parsons." And in later years, from time to time, as he printed one canto after another of the *Purgatory* in the pages of the *Catholic World*, he did me the honor to send me his manuscript or his proof-sheet for such remark as I might venture to make upon it. Our opinions as to the best method of translation differed; but the quality of his work made my task of criticism even more helpful to myself than it could have been to him, while his open-mindedness and his scholarship were such that he gave more heed than they deserved to my friendly suggestions. His fastidious taste, his conscientious effort not to fall short of his own ideal standard of accomplishment, made his progress slow; and he has left the trans-

lation of the *Purgatory* incomplete, and that of the *Paradise* little more than begun.

So far as his work has gone, I believe that it is safe to assert that as a rhymed version in English of the *Divine Comedy* it has no superior. Its form is that of verse of five feet, with alternate rhymes. It does not attempt to render verse for verse, nor even to follow literally the words of the original without other addition or subtraction than that which the genius of the language requires. The translator allows himself a certain freedom. He is a poet, and his translation is to be an English poem. The substance is Dante's, but the mode of expression is often changed from his. Without knowledge of the original, one may read it with ease and pleasure, and with little sense of any hampering conformities to a foreign original. There are many parts in which the translation reaches so high a level of natural poetry that the reader may readily forget that the English poet is following an Italian model. But the student of Dante's own verse feels throughout that the style and tone are the translator's, not Dante's. It may be a fine style, it may be a fine tone, but neither one nor the other is that of him who *sovra gli altri come aquila vola.* The aquiline character is not here. The sweep of wing, the compressed

force of stroke, the reserved power, are wanting. Take a single instance, two verses from the famous fifth canto of the *Inferno:* —

> "Io cominciai: Poeta, volentieri
> Parlerei a que' due che insieme vanno."

> "And I began: Great builder of the rhyme!
> Fain would I speak with yonder pair who glide."

The difference is not a mere difference between Italian and English: it is a difference of essence, a difference in poetic nature; a difference, as I have said, of style and tone.

But when every allowance is made, this work of Dr. Parsons's is an achievement which, in conjunction with his original poetry, will secure for him that *onrata nominanza* which he would have desired as a follower of the *altissimo poeta.*

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

THOMAS WILLIAM PARSONS:

1819–1892.

THE history of the present translation is with diffidence written out, as if it were a thing separable from the man who made it. Hardly in any sense a task, this scholar's Dante grew to be the divine persuasion, the solemn solace, the moral enthusiasm of fifty-five years; it was done at leisure and by liking; and, beyond the first Cantiele, it remains fragmentary and unfinished. Dr. Parsons was a poet of the truest type; he might have devoted his exquisite native art and ripe learning altogether, as he did in very small part, to the pleasures of his own genius. But at seventeen he was taken by his English father on the first of many prolonged visits to Italy; he saw Dante, as it were, face to face, and he was never quite free thereafter. He learned the *Paradise* by heart, walking the streets of Florence and Ravenna; he began, even in the sojourns of his enchanted youth, to transpose it into his own tongue, with infinite

humbleness and anxiety of spirit, and with an ever-gathering sweetness and power.

Dr. Parsons tells us that his earliest studies of Dante were cast in the *terza rima:* a fashion afterwards thrown aside in favor of the measure of Dryden and Gray, "which already hath possession of the English ear, and must charm it forever." Of these earliest studies, comprising, according to their author, "a good portion of the *Divine Comedy*," not a line survives. Meanwhile, the memory of their form and phrase must have wrought strongly with him to prevent his recasting the *Paradise;* one does not shake off so readily the fiery garment of the mind. A second metrical experiment tried upon the opening canto of the *Paradise* figures in this book; although not unimpressive, it was shortly, in its turn, abandoned, nor was it replaced. The minor portion of the *Hell* appeared in 1843, in a limited edition which adopted Landor's spelling of past participles. Influenced by the eager devotion of his wife, and by the deep interest of friendly critics in London and in Rome, Dr. Parsons spurred himself on, and achieved the first Canticle before 1867; so that, as it now stands, it represents his final thought, if any thought could be called final with him whose restless search for perfection availed to

worry and interline even the long-printed quarto page.

The *Purgatory* spread itself in irregular sequence, over a considerable period of time. There is much reason to suppose that the translator really completed more than we have been enabled to present; at least, there is a likelihood that its twenty-fifth canto was finished, and that the twenty-ninth and thirty-second were done in part, although no copy of these is extant. The *Ante-Purgatory* alone was consummated, and privately issued. What follows it, embodying many famous and touching passages, was sent at long intervals to the *Catholic World*, of which the late Reverend Isaac T. Hecker was then editor.

The *Paradise* was never entirely remodeled; grains of its gold-dust only have been found and added. Meantime, and during the arrested development of the whole, the ideals of Dante ceased not to sway and color his disciple's mind. He translated beautiful segments of *The New Life*. A dozen of his songs (among them *Paradisi Gloria*, *Sotto l'Usbergo del Sentirsi Puro*, and the sonnet *Ben dell' Intelletto*) were inspired by texts of the eternal epic. His hand, clear as Giotto's, has drawn the sweet and disdainful Dantesque

profile again and again; for the splendid characterizations of his best-known poem, a great lyric worthy of Gray, repeat themselves, with diverse rather than less charm, in ΥΠΝΟΣ, and in Francesca da Rimini. Never was poet more under a noble spell than this one. It is no exaggeration to say that to him Dante was heart-blood and life-breath, and not absent from his inmost meditations. Nothing better proves the essential robustness of Dr. Parsons's intellect, than the fact that while he walked so devoutly in the great Florentine's shadow, nowhere in his individual verses is there a single unconscious imitation of him, a single borrowed and unacknowledged excellence.

There is no doubt that he meant to have built a complete memorial of his master, unto such eternity as his skill allowed. But he worked with so real a religiousness that haste, or expediency, or compulsion never was allowed to touch him; merely a little passing mundane cloud, intruding on the mediæval peace of his green-bowered desk at Wayland or Scituate, made him throw down his pen for the day. No entry in his brief diaries, kept along the margin of the manuscript translation, where each baptized page bears the sign of the cross, and a prayerful invocation like that of a Benedictine of old, is commoner than "*Væ mihi!*

dies parum efficax." A melancholy winter light, the stir of the city, a letter to answer, a visit to receive, any trifling offense to his fastidious eye or ear, the very sense of worship always with him, the sense also of the difficult grandeur with which he had to deal, were enough to turn him from his vocation, even for months and years at a time, and to his own grief. This excessive sensibility to interruption deprived us of an entire English version of the *Divine Comedy;* but it reserved the most heart-whole and illumined energy for what was actually attained. As Dr. Parsons wrote, at twenty-four, in a masterly preface: "If the iron Alighieri himself confessed that his sacred song had made him lean, through many years, it may be acknowledged that, for ordinary faculties, simply to transmute the precious ore into a merchantable shape were no insignificant work. To render him properly requires, in short, somewhat of Dante's own moods: it needs time and toil. Fasting and solitude might not be amiss."

It will be seen how long ago this late-issued book has its birth and growth, how far it preceded much admirable modern exposition of its hero and arch-priest. Dr. Parsons was steeped in his Dante, himself the digest of many universities; he had brooded over that illimitable strange horizon till

all near objects dissolved away. Yet he contented himself, in his unpolemical manner, with few notes; and these were not historic, theological, scientific, but produced, by choice, from the less discoverable data, the workings of his own mind. He had both a close solicitude and a manly unconcern for his work; once in type, albeit not given forth, it seemed to lose the sacredness it had for him while it was in progress. His treasure, however, in death as in life, is here. He had a fine Italian detachment from the world of gain and strife, but for this one thing he cared. The best in him went to vivify and freshen it. It made his inner happiness, especially in his last and lonelier years; for virtue, in literature if not in life, is its own reward. By that service to a classic, rather than by some unique and most lovely numbers in which he seemed to take Ben Jonson's advice to "sing high and aloof," would he have wished to be known.

An unrevised life-labor, plucked for the public while yet green upon the bough, bears itself meekly, and hopes for consideration. Wherever there are grievously broken sequences, an absent or detached passage, a forgiveness must be asked, though not for the author, who would one day have perfected them all. The text comparison of nearly every manuscript canto of the translation

has been a nice and repaying labor; for there is, not uncommonly, a choice between as many as four or five renderings. Dr. Parsons had, in full, the artistic temperament and its concomitant conscience: he seldom erred into rhetoric; he fled from prose, save where his majestic model had employed it before him. But his endeavor is to keep always on the Saxon, homespun side of things; his terseness, his literalness, his archaisms, are notes of genius; only a poet could dare so to intone and sustain them. He was in no marked degree capable of diluting an idea, or of adorning it with "purple patches, gratuitous felicities." He had scruples even over an adjective necessarily and harmoniously interpolated. The voweled diction of

> "Soon as we slack awhile our painful pace
> By the sad marge of ancient Acheron," —

to select a random example, from the *Hell*, was overborne, in its author's mind, by the remembrance of the calmer statement, —

> "*Quando noi fermeremo i nostri passi*
> *Su la trista riviera d'Acheronte.*"

Therefore he revised it: —

> "Soon as we stay our footsteps for a space
> Beside the dismal strand of Acheron."

Surely, the inevitable expansion in the earlier version was a distinct gain, and a beauty. Above all, Dr. Parsons can be trusted, with a touch so light it is often unsuspected, to dispel a vagueness or insert some little clarification, and to deal firmly with paraphrase where the prodigious force of the Tuscan idiom is such that the best English threatens to break under it.

No other imitator of Dante, except perhaps, Rossetti, is willing to go, for the most part, in such russet English, unashamed. He is severe with a grace where it would fain interfere with a force. He has an accent of large and serious simplicity, now rustic, anon most courtly and winning. In faithful technical detail, as in certain right inborn scorns, reticences, antagonisms, he was Dante's man; he had not pondered for nothing

> "The lips as Cumæ's cavern close,"

nor striven altogether in vain to catch their ineffable austerity.

Dr. Parsons is as yet hardly known to his own countrymen, who have long had before them an outline of his gentle and endearing character in the Poet of *The Wayside Inn.* The conditions of his daily life were wholly advantageous; the high-minded group who made the illustrious Boston

and the Harvard University of forty and fifty years ago were his friends, and from them he had always the sole recognition which he found good. He reminds one sometimes, in his patrician shyness, of the elect men of letters of the seventeenth century, of Drummond and Daniel, children of a pensive but fortunate Muse, "retired as noontide dew." He dwelt, through a decadent era, in a joyous cloister of the imagination, enamored of the past, troubling himself not at all except about visions venerable and fair; having "glimpses of incomprehensibles, and thoughts of things which thoughts do but tenderly touch." While he walked in the flesh, it was rather with spirits than with his kind; and those who knew him know that he need not have gone far, nor changed much, on his master's shining upward way *a farsi più bello.*

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY.

HELL.

HELL.

CANTO THE FIRST.

HALFWAY on our life's journey, in a wood,
From the right path I found myself astray.
Ah, to describe how dark it was, how rude,
That savage forest, chills me to this day!
Its very thought is almost death to me;
Yet, having found some good there, I will tell
Of other things which there I chanced to see.
But how I came therein, I know not well,
For sleep had mastered me when first I went
From the true way, abandoned in my woe;
Till having reached the foot of an ascent
Where this vale ended that appalled me so,
Looking on high, its shoulders I beheld
Robed in the planet's rays who guides men right
Through every pass: then part the fear was quelled
That froze my heart's lake all that piteous night.
Like one cast breathless, gasping, from the spray,
Who eyes the watery peril from the shore,

My mind, still flying, turned me to survey
The track no living man e'er passed before.
Then, after easing my worn limbs with rest,
On through that wilderness I wandered, still
Keeping my lower foot most firmly prest;
When, lo! beginning now to climb the hill,
A Leopard, glistening in a dappled hide,
That would not fly, though light and full of speed,
Hindering my way, before me I descried,
And often turned, as doubtful to proceed.

The time was morning; and the sun above
The world was riding with his kindred stars,
Those old companions from the day when Love
Divine first launched their adamantine cars:
Hope cheered my heart to mark the dawning bright,
The season sweet, the creature's lively dress;
But soon a Lion met my startled sight,
Whose fearful shape renewed my late distress.
With towering head he stalked, and ravenous mien,
Striding towards me, and seemed to shake the air!
Next came a Female Wolf, that long hath been
The curse of millions dwelling in despair.
Meagre, but looking crammed with every lust,
She caused such horror through my soul to creep
That I began to falter, and mistrust
My power to win the summit of the steep.
I felt like one who, gladly gathering gain,

Until some luckless time that brings him loss,
Then, all disheartened, sorely doth complain, —
To see that restless beast my pathway cross.
With every stride she drove me slowly back
Down where no sun the stillness did illume;
But while I thus was falling from my track,
A form before me glimmered through the gloom,
Whom faintly marking, as obscure he seemed
In the long silence of that desert glade,
"Whate'er thou art, oh pity me!" I screamed,
"Whether a living man, or but a shade."

"No man," he answered: "once I was a man;
Mantua my Lombard parents called their home;
In Julius' reign, though late, my life began,
And, under good Augustus, passed at Rome.
In those false days, by lying gods o'errun,
A Poet I, and sang of him who came
From blazing Troy, Anchises' righteous son,
When all proud Ilion melted in one flame.
But thou, so rough a struggle why repeat?
Why rather climb not this glad mountain-side,
Of all delight the source and happy seat?"
Whereto, with bashful forehead, I replied:

"Art thou that Virgil, then, the mighty spring
Who pour'st of language that majestic stream?
O light and glory of the race who sing!

Let it avail me that, with love extreme
And zeal unwearied, I have searched thy book:
Thou my choice Author art, my Master thou;
Thou the sole fountain whence my genius took
The style whose grace gives laurel to my brow!
Behold yon monster in my road, whose rage
Thrills through my veins until my pulses quake;
Defend me from her, thou illustrious Sage!"
Whereat, observing how I wept, he spake:

"This savage wilderness if thou wouldst fly,
For thee thy journey lies a different way;
Since yonder brute, which wakes this piteous cry,
Permits no mortal on her path to stray, —
Nay, every trespasser with death prevents;
So bad by nature, so accursed at core,
Her greedy appetite she ne'er contents,
But, after gorging, still howls on for more.
With many a beast already she hath lain,
And shall with many another, leagued in lust,
Till come the Greyhound, slaying her with pain!
He will not feed on earthly dross and dust,
But wisdom, love, and virtue: He shall dwell
'Twixt the two Feltros; comfort He shall spread
O'er Latium's land for which Camilla fell,
Turnus, Euryalus, and Nisus bled.
'T is He shall worry her through every town,
Till back to Hell, wherefrom she first arose,

(Envy's rank spawn), He shall have dragged her
down:
There, for thy good, to lead thee I propose.
Come, thou shalt follow me; and I will be
Through regions infinite and dark thy guide,
Where thou shalt hear the desperate shrieks, and
see
Souls who for ages have in anguish cried
'Oh for that second death!'—But happier some
Shalt thou behold who dwell in flames content,
Hoping at last amid the blest to come;
To whom wouldst thou hereafter make the ascent,
Unto a spirit worthier far than I,
At parting, I must render thee; because
He, the Great Potentate who reigns on high,
Found me rebellious to His holy laws.
He, through my guidance, therefore, none admits
To His pure City. He reigns everywhere;
But there His throne is, there He dwells and sits.
O happy, happy whom He chooses there!"
Then I to him: "O Poet! I implore,
Even by that God unknown to thee of old,
So may I shun this misery and more,
(Whatever worse remaineth to be told),
That thou wilt bring me to the mentioned place,
Where I may look upon Saint Peter's gate,
First having viewed the woes of that sad race."
Then he moved on, and I behind him straight.

CANTO THE SECOND.

DAY was departing, and the dusky light
Freed earthly creatures from their labor's load:
I alone girt me to sustain the fight,
(A strife no less with pity than my road),
Which memory now shall paint in truth's own hue:
O Muse, O soaring genius, help me here!
O mind, recording all that met my view!
Here must thy native nobleness appear.

Thus I began: "O thou who art my Guide,
Poet! what strength my humble virtue hath
Examine well, before with steps untried
My feet be trusted to that arduous path.
Thou tell'st of Silvius, how his father went
Among the immortals, animated still
With sense, in flesh corruptible still pent,
Such was His grace who hateth every ill;
But gracious Heaven weighed then the high result,
Both who and what should spring from such a seed!
Nor to man's reason seems the cause occult,
Since he was in the empyreal sphere decreed
The future Father of benignant Rome,
And of Rome's empire, which were pre-ordained
To be the holy seat and sacred home

Of him who sits where greater Peter reigned.
That visit, famed by thee o'er all the globe,
Taught him the events wherefrom, in process, grew
His conquest, and, in fine, the Papal robe.
God's 'chosen vessel' journeyed heavenward too,
To strengthen more that faith wherein alone
The primal steps of our salvation lie;
But why to me were such indulgence shown?
For no Æneas, no Saint Paul, am I.
Small is my worth in mine as men's esteem;
Should I, so humble, so forlorn and weak,
Venture this going, 't would but folly seem:
Thou 'rt wise; more wise to hear than I to speak."
As one who wavers in his wish, by doubt
Discouraged wholly from his first design,
Thus I, on Hell's dim coast, in thought wore out
That eager spirit which before was mine.

"If I thy language rightly have conceived,"
Serenely answered that majestic Shade,
"Thy mind of manhood is through fear bereaved,
Which oft a mortal bosom will invade,
That man from noble action, like a beast
Starting at some false vision, is deterred;
From which poor cowardice be now released!
Mark wherefore I am come, what I have heard,
When first for thee compassion touched my breast;
With those I dwelt who in suspense remain:

A Lady called me, beautiful and blest,
Whom I besought her mandates to explain.
Brighter her eyes beamed than the ruling star!
And thus she spake, in accents mild and low,
And tones all music, as an angel's are:

"'Know, gracious Mantuan, gentle spirit, know,
Thou whose fame lives and shall, till motion end!
In the wild waste, opposed upon his track,
A friend of mine, yet ah! not fortune's friend,
Trembling with terror, from his way turns back;
And much I fear, by what in Heaven I heard,
That I to succor him have risen too late,
So far from his true pathway he has erred.
Then hie thee, Virgil, with thy phrase ornate,
And with what else his rescue may require;
By helping him, give comfort unto me:
For I am Beatrice who thus desire,
And come from where again I fain would be.
Love called me hither, and I speak from Love:
Full oft thy praise I will enforce on high,
When I shall stand before my Lord above.'

"The virgin ceased, and thus responded I:
'O soul of goodness! which alone mankind
Exalts above all beings of the sphere,
Whose heavenly orbit is the most confined,
Lady! thy sweet commandment charms mine ear

So that, already were thy wish obeyed,
To my desire such readiness were slow;
But tell me why, from that large kingdom strayed,
Thy longed-for home, thou venturest here below.'

"'Deeply thou questionest; briefly, then,' she said,
'I will inform thee why, without alarm,
I wander hither: nothing is to dread,
Except those things that work a brother's harm.
Such things alone are to be feared; and such
Have I been fashioned by the grace of God
That me thy misery hath no power to touch, —
No, nor the flames of this austere abode.
In heaven, one gentle mourner so laments
The sore distress I send thee to relieve,
That in his rigor Justice half relents;
From her did Lucia this command receive:
"Now needs thy faithful one thy service: go!
To thy sole care his fortune I confide."
Then Lucia, cruelty's most constant foe,
Came where I sat by ancient Rachel's side.
"Why, Beatrice, true praise of God!" she said,
"Dost thou not speed thee to befriend thine own,
Who for thy love the vulgar crowd hath fled?
Hearest thou not the misery of his moan?
Seest thou the death wherewith he now must cope
By that dark stream whose waves like ocean's
toss?"

Never did worldling fly so swift, in hope
Of making profit, or in fear of loss,
As I, thus hearing her mine office teach,
Left my blest seat, and hither hastening came,
Putting my trust in thy majestic speech,
Which honors thee, and gives thy pupils fame.'

"After thus arguing, she turned away
Those radiant eyes which piteous drops did fill:
This gave me speed; and thus, without delay,
I came to thee, obedient to her will.
'Twas I who saved thee from the She-Wolf's wrath,
Which o'er that fair mount hindered so thy road;
What now? What makes thee falter in thy path?
Why should thy heart so timidly forebode?
Why art not fearless, resolute, and free,
Since three such beings beautiful and blest,
Even in the courts of Heaven, watch over thee,
And so much good my promise hath exprest?"

As flowerets, by the frosty breath of night
Shut up and drooping, soon as daylight glows
Spring on their stems all open and upright,
Even so my wearied courage freshly rose;
And such gay spirits coursed my bosom through
That now, enfranchised, I was bold to say:
"O pitying soul to my relief that flew!

And gracious thou so quickly to obey!
The truth alone that gentle angel spake
In her kind words, and thou no less with thine
Dost in my bosom such desire awake
That gladly I renew my first design.
Then, since one wish conducts us both, lead on!
Thou art my Lord, my Master, and my Guide."
Thus I addressed the shadow, and anon
Through the steep woody way began to glide.

CANTO THE THIRD.

Through me you reach the City of Despair:
Through me eternal wretchedness ye find:
Through me among perdition's tribe ye fare:
Justice inspired my lofty founder's mind:
Power, love, and wisdom, heavenly, first, most high,
Created me. Before me naught had been
Save things eternal, and eterne am I:
Leave here all hope, O ye who enter in!

These words upon the gateway, overhead,
In blackest letters written, I discerned.
"Master, their sense is terrible," I said;
And thus to me the ready Sage returned:
"Perish each coward thought! be firm, be bold:
We've reached the place wherein, as told thou wast,

The miserable race thou shalt behold,
Who of their intellect the good have lost."
And thereupon my hand he took in his,
With a glad look, fresh courage to bestow,
And straight unfolded all the mysteries,
'Mid sighs, laments, and hollow howls of woe,
Which, loud resounding through the starless air,
Forced tears of pity from mine eyes at first;
For divers tongues and horrid language there,
With words of agony, wrath's frequent burst,
Shrieks, and hoarse outcries, with a noise of hands,
Mingling forever, vex in tumult strange,
As when a whirlwind tosses round the sands,
That air whose tints come from no season's change.

And I, my head in stupid horror bound,
Said: "Master, tell me, what is this I hear?
What wretched souls are these in anguish drowned?"
To which he answered: "This award severe
On those unhappy spirits is bestowed,
Of whom nor infamy nor good was known,
Joined with that wicked crew which, unto God
Nor false nor faithful, served themselves alone.
Heaven drove them forth, Heaven's beauty not to stain;
Nor will the deep Hell deign to have them there
For any glory that the damned might gain."

"Master," I asked, "what torment do they bear?
Why of such suffering are such groans begot?"
"Briefly," said he, "to die they have no hope;
Envious they are of every other lot,
In such a blind and groveling state they grope;
The world their hateful memory doth contemn;
Mercy herself would scorn for them to plead;
Justice disdains them. We 'll not speak of them:
Give them a glance, one only, and proceed."

Then I, still gazing, saw a flag unfurled,
Indignant, as it seemed, at any rest,
So swiftly, as 't was borne along, it whirled;
And after it a countless legion pressed.
Such multitudes I ne'er could have believed
By conquering death had ever low been laid;
And some I recognized, for I perceived
Him who through fear that great refusal made.
At once I understood their kind, and knew
That God himself, and those with God at strife,
Alike despised that execrable crew,
Dead souls, which, even when living, had no life.
Naked they were, and stung from toe to crown
By wasps and hornets buzzing round them thick;
From their scarred faces to their feet streamed down
Tears, mixed with blood, which loathsome worms did lick.

Now, gazing farther still, I could discern
A crowd upon a river's ample shore:
"Who are those, Master? what, I fain would learn,
Makes them appear thus anxious to pass o'er?
Yet through the gloom their forms I scarce can trace."
"These things," he answered, "thou shalt know anon,
Soon as we slack awhile our painful pace,
On the sad marge of ancient Acheron."
Then, fearing lest too freely I had spoke
What to my Guide importunate might seem,
I bent mine eyes, abashed, nor silence broke,
Until we reached the border of the stream.

And toward us, in a vessel, rowing, lo!
An agèd hoary man, with hair snow-white,
Came crying: "Woe to ye, bad spirits, woe!
Never hope ye to enjoy Heaven's blessed sight.
I come to bear ye to the other bank;
In darkness infinite, in heat, in cold:
But thou, who still dost with the living rank,
Begone! nor mingle with the dead so bold."
Then, seeing that obedience I declined:
"Some other way approach the strand!" quoth he:
"You pass not here; another ferry find;
Some less o'erladen bark must carry thee!"
"Vex not thyself, O Charon! Thus 't is willed

Where what is willed is done; demand no more:"
My Leader thus the shaggy helmsman stilled,
Who pilots all that livid marish o'er.
Round his red eyes rolled wheels of living flame;
But those tired ghosts, quivering like naked birds,
Their teeth all chattering, paler still became,
Soon as they caught the inexorable words.
Then God Almighty they blasphemed, and those
From whom they sprung, their parents and their kin,
The human race, the seed wherefrom they rose,
The hour and place they were engendered in.

So, as all must who fear not God, the shoal
Withdrew, loud howling, toward that sinful shore;
Fiend Charon, with his eyes of burning coal,
Beckoning them, beats each laggard with his oar,
And gathers them together as they drop,
Like leaves in autumn falling thickly round,
Each after each, till every towering top
Yields all its yellow vesture to the ground:
Even, in like manner, Adam's seed impure
Throw from the brink their figures, one by one,
At given signs, as birds obey the lure,
Then glide together o'er the waters dun.
And, ere they have departed, draweth nigh
Another spectral army to the strand.
"Son!" said my gracious Master, "all who die

In their God's wrath meet here from every land.
Justice divine stills goads them onward so
That every fear becomes desire at last;
And o'er the flood right willingly they go:
By no good spirit ever is it passed.
Therefore did Charon of thyself complain;
And what he meant thou comprehendest now."

He ceased. The gloomy region shook amain!
Still its mere memory bathes with sweat my brow:
Rumbled that land of tears with moaning wind;
A light, vermilion-colored, flashed from Hell;
And wholly vanquishing my palsied mind,
Even as a man whom sleep o'ertakes, I fell.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

My brain's deep sleep was broken by a stroke
Of jarring thunder, so that roused upright,
Like one by sudden violence awoke,
With eyes refreshed, I rolled around my sight;
And fixedly I gazed, the place to know
Wherein I found me: o'er the brink I hung
Of the dread valley of the abyss of woe,
Whence gathered groans in ceaseless thunders rung.
Dark, fathomless, it yawned; clouds o'er it curled;

Down in its depths I pored, but naught discerned.
"Descend we now to yonder rayless world,"
The Poet said, and deadly pale he turned;
"But be thou second; I will go the first."
Whereto I answered, noting his changed hue,
"Art thou dismayed who still my strength hast nurst?
Then how shall I this journey dare pursue?"
Then he to me: "The anguish that you hear
Of those who moan below there makes my face
Pallid with pity; never think I fear!
But come; our long road chides this lingering pace."

Herewith he entered, and conveyed me in
To the first circle of the pit profound,
Where naught distinct I heard, but one low din
Of sighs that shook the eternal breeze around:
Sighs born of mental, not of corporal throes,
'Mid countless crowds of women, babes, and men.
"Inquir'st not," said my Master, "who are those,
The spirits yonder, now within thy ken?
Ere thou proceed, this to thy knowledge add:
No sinners they; if so far they have meed,
'T is not enough, since they no baptism had;
This doctrine being portion of thy creed.
Christ's coming, too, since they were born before,
(And numbered with such hapless ones am I)

They could but ignorantly God adore,
For which deficiency alone we die;
Punished thus far, that in desire we dwell,
Ceaseless desire where hope hath never birth."
I grieved to hear him, for I knew right well
Hung in that Limbo many a soul of worth.
"Tell me, my Master, tell me, Sire," I said,
"To assure that faith which sets all doubt at rest,
By his own merits, or another's sped,
Went any ever hence to join the blest?"
Then he, who well my inmost meaning knew,
Answered: "Herein I had not long been bound,
When an All-puissant One I saw march through,
With victory's radiant sign triumphal crowned.
He led from us our Father Adam's shade;
Abel, and Noah whom God loved the most;
Lawgiving Moses who that law obeyed;
Abra'am the patriarch; royal David's ghost;
Israel, his father and his sons; and her
Whom Israel served for faithfully and long,
Rachel, with more, to bliss did he transfer:
No souls were saved before this chosen throng."

During these words our pace we did not slack,
But passed the forest (forest, let me say),
So thickly swarmed the spirits round our track.
Nor had we far descended on our way,
When, through the gloom of that black hemisphere,

A light I noticed which the darkness quelled,
And partly saw, though still not very near,
A race of dignity that region held.
"Thou who all knowledge honor'st, and all art!
What souls are those who seem thus glorified,
That from the others they are set apart?"
"Their names," he said, "are sounded far and wide;
Some grace Heaven grants them, for thy world's esteem."
So speaking, fell a voice upon mine ear:
"Honor and glory to the Bard supreme!
Whose shade, which left us lately, now draws near."
Then, as this voice grew quiet, and was hushed,
Four mighty shades I saw advancing dim;
No sorrow paled their cheeks nor gladness flushed.
"Look!" my good Master said: "take note of him,
The first, who bears a sword, and chief is reckoned.
'T is Homer, of all bards the sovereign classed;
Horace the satirist, he comes the second;
The third is Ovid; Lucan is the last.
Since all their voices, mingling thus in one,
Give me a title which alike we share,
They do me honor, and 't is nobly done."
Thus the whole school I saw assembled fair
Of him, song's loftiest lord, that o'er the rest

Soars like an eagle; they conferred awhile,
Then, me saluting, much good-will exprest,
Whereat my Master blandly deigned to smile.
Nay, honor they devised for me still higher,
In bidding me with their sage throng unite,
So I was sixth amid that learned choir;
And on we moved, still traveling toward the light.
Speaking of things best unsaid in my rhymes,
Though there becoming, we pursued our road
Toward a proud castle, walled about seven times;
Round which, a fair defense, a streamlet flowed.
O'er this we passed, as it had solid been,
And through seven gates, with our companions wise,
Entered a meadow fresh with living green,
Where dwelt a race with grave, majestic eyes.
Authority was writ in every face;
Sweetly they spake, but seldom: we withdrew
Into an open luminous high place,
So that the whole were facile to my view.

Straight was I shown, on that enameled mead,
Those mighty spirits whom the world commends,
Whom to have looked on makes me proud indeed:
I saw Electra circled with her friends;
Hector I marked; Æneas 'mid the ring;
Cæsar, all armed, and like a hawk fierce-eyed;

Penthesiléa, with Camilla; King
Latinus resting by Lavinia's side;
Brutus I saw, who Tarquin's tribe expelled;
Cornelia, Marcia, Julia, chaste Lucrece;
There Saladin sequestered I beheld;
Then, looking up, that master sage of Greece,
The Stagirite, who sat all-honored there
Girt with his philosophic household band;
Plato I saw, and Socrates: this pair
Before their fellows, next the leader stand;
Thales I saw, and Zeno at a glance,
With Anaxagoras; Diogenes;
Democritus, who lays the world to chance;
Heraclitus; Orpheus; Dioscorides,
Good herbalist that was; Empedocles;
Seneca, Livy, Tully, matchless men!
Earth-measuring Euclid; Ptolemy; by these
Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicen;
Averroës, that commentator vast —
But ah! of all I cannot duly speak,
So by my subject is my power surpassed
Whate'er I tell, compared with truth, is weak.

We six companions here in twain divide;
From that still air to one with tempests shook
I came, conducted by my sapient Guide;
A gloomier part, by every beam forsook.

CANTO THE FIFTH.

FROM that first circle parting thus, I went
Down to the next, which girds a lesser space,
Yet where worse pains the howling souls torment:
There Minos, grinning, stands with hideous face,
And scans the offenses of each comer-in.
When the bad soul its guilt hath fully told,
He knows its place, and judgeth every sin,
As in strange wise his form he doth infold;
How many ranks, according to their crimes,
Each must descend, he noteth with his tail,
Winding it round his loins so many times:
Numbers before him always wait and wail.
By turns they come to judgment and confess,
And hear their doom, then down are hurried straight.
"O thou, who seek'st this mansion of distress,"
Cried Minos, pausing in his work of fate,
"Beware! beware in whom thou wouldst confide;
Take heed of entering; trust not this broad way!"
"Wherefore this empty clamor?" said my Guide:
"His destined passage dare not thou to stay!
Vex thee not, Minos; even thus 't is willed
Where what is willed is done. Demand no more!"
Now were mine ears with notes of anguish thrilled,
Now countless lamentations pierced me sore.

I reached a spot with scarce a glimmer blest,
Which roared like ocean torn by warring storms:
The infernal blast, which never knoweth rest,
In furious wreck whirls on the shadowy forms,
Driving and madly dashing them along;
And, when destruction's very brink they reach,
Then shriek, then scream and yell the frantic throng,
Yea, Heaven's High King blaspheme with horrid speech!

Such pangs, I found, those carnal sinners feel
Who to low impulses their reason bowed;
And like as starlings in the winter wheel
Their airy flight, a large, wide-wavering crowd,
So that fierce gust these erring spirits blows
This way and that way, up and down the cope;
Nor can they find, I say not of repose,
But of diminished pain, one moment's hope.
Or like as cranes, a melancholy swarm,
Go moaning through the air in one long trail,
So I beheld, before the pelting storm,
Those ghosts, fast-flying with incessant wail.

"Master," I asked, "what wretched race is that,
Scourged in this murky air to such extreme?"
"The foremost of them," he replied, "once sat
Empress o'er many-languaged lands supreme.

In lust she grew so boundless and so free
That, haply so to vindicate her shame,
She rendered lewdness lawful by decree:
Semiramis that is, well known to fame.
The land the Sultan sways she ruled in pride,
To Ninus the successor and the spouse.
The other is the amorous suicide,
Who to her dead Sicheus brake her vows."
Voluptuous Cleopatra next I saw;
Helen, the guilty cause of woes so vast.
On great Achilles next I looked with awe,
Who fought with love eternal to the last.
Paris and Tristan then, and many more,
More than a thousand shadows as they flew,
He pointed out to me, and named them o'er,
On earth whom Love's unhallowed passion slew.
When I had heard my Teacher call by name
These knights and ladies of the olden time,
My wildered soul compassion quite o'ercame,
And I began: "Great Builder of the rhyme!
Fain would I speak with yonder pair who glide
Together, light before this whirlwind borne."
"Watch them until they 're nearer," he replied;
"Then, by that love which leads them here to mourn,
Beseech them they will come." Whereat I did
Invoke them, when the gale had blown them near:

"O troubled spirits! come, unless forbid
By some High Power, your story let us hear!"

As wandering doves, bound homeward through the sky,
Called by desire, with wings wide-open thrown,
Steadily toward their pleasant dwellings fly,
Sped ever onward by their wish alone;
So, from the troop where Dido ranks, they sailed
Toward me, through that dim atmosphere malign,
My passionate entreaty so prevailed.

"O breathing being, gracious and benign,
Who com'st to visit through this lurid air
Us, whose heart's blood hath stained the world above!
To Him who rules the universe our prayer
Should rise for thy soul's peace had we His love;
And, since thou pitiest thus our ill-starred fate,
Listen, or speak; for, whatsoe'er ye will,
We will as freely hear of as relate,
While this dread blast is for the moment still.

"My native city stands upon the shore
Where Po descends in Adria's peace to rest,
Raging with all his rivulets no more.
Love, quick to kindle every gentler breast,
Fired this fond being with the beauteous shape

Bereft me so, (I shudder at the way!)
Love, who permits no loved one to escape,
Me too subduing, charmed with equal sway;
Even here thou seest the rapture hath not died:
And Love led both of us to one fell death,
But Cain's own pangs our murderer must bide."
These broken words came wafted on their breath.

Listening these injured souls, I hung my head.
"What dost thou think?" inquired the Bard.
"Alas!
What tender thoughts, how strong a wish," I said,
"Brought those two lovers to their woeful pass!"
Then, turning round to them, I thus began:
"Francesca! tears must overflow mine eyes:
My pitying soul thy martyr-throes unman;
But tell me, in the time of happy sighs,
Your vague desires how gave Love utterance first?"
And she to me: "The mightiest of all woes
Is, in the midst of misery, to be cursed
With bliss remembered; this thy teacher knows.
Yet, wouldst thou learn our passion's root and head,
As one may speak whose eyes with tears are dim,
So will I speak. Together once we read
The tale of Lancilot, how love seized him!
Alone we were, without suspecting aught:
Oft in perusal changed our cheeks their hue,
And oft our eyes each other's glances caught:

But one sole passage 't was that both o'erthrew.
At reading of the longed-for smile to be
By such a lover's kissing so much blest,
This dearest, (never shalt thou part from me!)
His lips to mine, to mine, all trembling, pressed.
The writer was our Galeot, with his book:
That day we read no farther on." She stopped;
Meanwhile he moaned so much, compassion took
My sense away, and like a corse I dropped.

CANTO THE SIXTH.

My mind returning, which had been so drowned
In pity, listening to that kindred pair,
Wildered with grief, I mark, on gazing round,
New pangs, new victims writhing everywhere,
Where'er I move, where'er mine eye explores
The peopled gloom, where'er I turn again;
For the third circle now I reach, where pours
One heavy, cursèd, cold, relentless rain.
Thick muddy water, snow and hailstones coarse
That rayless atmosphere eternal drench;
Ceaseless the flood, unchanged in kind or force:
The land it soaks is putrid with one stench.
Fell monster Cerberus with hideous clack
Barks at the sinners from his triple jaws;
Red eyes he hath; a beard bedaubed and black;

A stomach turgid; armed with fangs his paws.
'T is his the unholy crew to tear and rend
Whose yells are like the howlings of a hound
In that mad storm; and often, to defend
One with the other side, they turn them round.
When Cerberus, that serpent's offspring grim,
Spied us, his mouths he opened, and exposed
His jaggy tusks, quivering in every limb.
Hereat my Guide stooped down, with hands unclosed,
And filled them with a portion of the mire
Which down those ravenous throats he straightway cast.
As bays a greedy dog with fierce desire,
But quiet grows, mumbling the snatched repast
For which alone his hunger fights and strains;
Even so were hushed those ugly gullets three
Of devilish Cerberus, whose howl so pains
The dizzy ghosts that deaf they long to be.

We walked o'er shadows by the bitter sleet
Battered and crushed; and on their empty forms,
Which seemed corporeal, trod with trembling feet,
As on the ground they lay in huddling swarms.
All saving one, which started up and said,
As on we strode past that poor sitting ghost:
"O thou who through this horrid Hell art led!
Speak; recognize me, if my face thou know'st:

Before I died, full surely thou wert born."
"Haply," said I, "thy tortures here erase
All recollection of that look forlorn:
Till now, methinks I never saw thy face.
Tell, then: who art thou, in this region dun,
Shut up 'mid such foul agonies to pine?
Greater there may be; more disgusting, none."
Said he: "Thy native city once was mine:
Within those walls, which with an envious crew
Like a heaped sack run o'er, my sweet life passed.
Ciacco, my townsmen! I was called by you:
Through gluttony's damned sin I fell at last.
Thence am I thus by this fierce tempest bruised,
No single sufferer: all this wretched herd,
My brother-ghosts, are thus severely used
For a like fault." He ended with this word.

"Ciacco," said I, "thy miserable fate
Tempts me to tears, and weighs my manhood down;
But tell me, if thou know'st, what griefs await
The citizens of that divided town.
Dwells any just one there? Inform me why
'T is thus o'erwhelmed in discord's raging flood."
"After long contests," — this was his reply, —
"The opposing sides shall come at last to blood.
The rustic faction shall in fury drive
The other out, but soon itself must bow:

Within three suns that other shall revive,
Strong in his aid who comes, a neutral now.
Long time a lofty port it shall sustain,
Making its foes beneath harsh burdens groan,
Howe'er they chafe and fret themselves in vain:
Just persons two there are, unheard, unknown.
Envy, and pride, and avarice, these three
Pernicious sparks have set all hearts on fire."
He ended, speaking in this mournful key.
"Say on!" I cried: "grant further my desire.
Tegghiaio, Farinata, both confessed
Such worthy men; Arrigo, Mosca too;
Jacopo Rusticucci, with the rest
Who bent their talents virtuous deeds to do;
Fain would I greet them: tell me if they dwell
(An earnest longing thrills my soul to know)
Soothed by Heaven's airs, or poisoned in this Hell?"
Said he: "With blacker souls they're sunk below,
For different faults down toward the bottom hurled:
If thou descend, their spirits thou mayst see.
Oh, when once more thou walk'st the pleasant world,
Then I implore thee to remember me!
I say no more, nor farther give reply."
He hung his head, and turned his face away,

Scanned me a little with a sidelong eye,
Fell 'mid those groping ghosts, and groveling lay.

Here spake my Guide: "Nothing shall rouse him now,
Till, when the angelic trump shall rend earth's womb,
Their Mighty Foe shall come with radiant brow:
Then each again must find his dismal tomb;
Then each his flesh and figure shall regain,
To hear the pealing of the eternal doom."
So with slow footsteps, 'mid the noisome rain,
Mixed up with shades, we struggled through the gloom.

And touching slightly on the future state,
"Master," said I, "the pangs which these abide
After the Judgment, will they be as great,
Or less or worse?" "Return thee," he replied,
"To thy philosophy, which teaches this:
As grows a thing more perfect, even so
Its sense grows keener, both of pain and bliss.
Ne'er can these wretches true perfection know;
Yet must they look to be more perfect then."
With this, and more which I forbear, we wound
About that road until it sloped again:
Here Plutus, that arch-enemy, we found.

CANTO THE SEVENTH.

"SATAN! more Popes: ho! Satan, Primate, here!
Plutus began with accent harsh and hoarse;
Whereat the omniscient Sage, my soul to cheer,
Said: "Fear not thou, nor falter in thy course.
Thy destined passage down this craggy path
He shall not hinder; vain is all his might."
Then turning to those lips that swelled with wrath,
"Silence, curst wolf!" he cried; "keep down thy spite;
On thine own entrails let thy fury feed.
Not without warrant are these depths explored:
'T is willed on high, where Heaven's adulterous breed,
Proud rebels! fell by Michael's vengeful sword."
As well-filled sails, which in the tempest swell,
Drop, with folds flapping, if the mast be rent,
So to the earth that cruel monster fell,
And straightway down to Hell's fourth pit we went.

Now deeper yet we pierced that doleful coast
Earth's universal evil which contains:
Justice of God! who heapest such a host
As there I witnessed of new throes and pains,
Why of our crime such scourges do we make?

Since not the leaping waves which upward spout
O'er wild Charybdis, when they clash and break,
Than this damned crew, more madly whirl about.
For here I marked a still more numerous flock,
With shrieks and tugging breasts, from side to side
Rolling huge weights which struck with violent shock:
Then, turning round, they rolled them back, and cried,
In mutual censure: "Why so close to keep?"
And "Why so eager ye to throw away?"
Then, toward the point opposed, I saw them sweep,
On either hand, to meet in fresh affray.
Thus chanting ever their reproachful song,
Thereby upbraiding still each other's fault,
Back through their dismal round, the toiling throng
Like tilters came, renewing the assault.
Heart-stung with grief, I said: "O Master mine!
What race is this? and those on our left hand,
With shaven crowns, the sacerdotal sign,—
Belonged they to the clergy's holy band?"
"All these," he answered, "had their mental sight
So far distorted in life's former scene,
They never used their worldly wealth aright;
And this is plainly what these outcries mean,
As, doomed for different sins toward either bourn

Of this sad round, they diversely advance.
There, 'mid yon clergy, with their tresses shorn,
Popes lead with Cardinals the eternal dance:
Avarice o'er these once held sole masterdom."
"Teacher," said I, "amid that restless herd,
Surely acquainted I should be with some,
Who to my knowledge once so foully erred."
"Vain thought!" he answered; "since the dark disgrace
Of their ill-spent and ignominious life,
Their forms from all remembrance doth efface.
Here aye they clash in this perpetual strife:
Those with clipped locks, and these with fists shut close,
Shall quit their sepulchres; for all were thrust
Either by avarice or profusion gross
From the fair world to encounter in this joust.
I will not smooth it o'er with phrases bland.
Now mayst behold, my son, how brief a bubble
Are those vain goods, consigned to fortune's hand,
For which thy race fret out their hearts with trouble;
Since all the gold that underneath the moon
Was ever dug, or in the mine yet glows,
Could not procure one weary soul the boon,
The blessed pittance, of an hour's repose."

"O Master mine! still more I would be told;

This fortune whom thou mention'st, what is she,
Who seems all riches in her clutch to hold?"
"Poor creatures!" he exclaimed, "how blind are ye!
Through what excess of ignorance ye fall!
Would ye might learn from this discourse of ours,
That He whose wisdom, so transcending all,
Gave to the heavens he framed presiding powers,
That sphere to sphere might each responsive shine,
And every part with equal radiance beam,
So to earth's glories also did assign
One general guide and guardian power supreme!
She in due turn wealth's empty dower translates
From race to race, from blood to blood, unchecked;
Hence come the glory and decay of states,
Obeying all a power whom none suspect;
For like a serpent in the grass concealed,
While mortal wisdom 'gainst her fights in vain,
She, even as other gods their sceptres wield,
Disposes, guides, and regulates her reign.
No truce to her mutations is allowed;
Necessity compels her to move fast,
So thick the claimants on her bounty crowd;
She 't is at whom such mangling terms are cast;
Even those who most should praise, blaspheme her most;
But her their curses little can annoy,

For blest is she, and with her fellow-host,
The first-created, fills her sphere in joy.
Now to more piteous torments we 'll descend;
Since every star which showed its rising ray,
When first I sped thy journey to befriend,
Is sinking fast, and chides our long delay."

The circle traversing, its brink we gained,
Just o'er a filthy fount of purplish hue;
This, boiling over, by a ditch was drained
Which the dark water hardly struggled through.
Entering another way with that sad rill
Whose inky dribblings down beside us crept,
We still accompanied its course, until
In that morass whose name is Styx they slept.
Here, at the scowling precipice's base,
I stopped, intently gazing, and beheld,
Plunged in that bog, a smeared but naked race,
With wrathful eyes, and veins with anger swelled.
These not with hands alone each other beat,
But headlong rushed, butting and striking sore;
Met breast to breast, and fought with furious feet;
Yea, piecemeal with their teeth each other tore.

"Behold! my son," my gentle Master said,
"The souls of those whom anger overthrew;
And oh, believe me! in the loathsome bed
Of this rank fen are myriads hid from view.

They sigh below, and by their sighing stir
The surface, bubbling as you see, around.
Fixed in the slime they murmur: 'Sad we were
In the glad air, and on the sunshine frowned;
Still in our blood a sullen vapor floats,
Sad in this dreggy bottom we remain.'
This doleful chant they gurgle in their throats,
Too choked with mire distinctly to complain."

Thus, a great circuit making 'twixt the mud
And the dry bank, we re-assumed our pace,
Gazing on those who swilled the nauseous flood:
At length we stopped beside a turret's base.

CANTO THE EIGHTH.

Resuming my suspended strain, I say,
Ere to the foot of that high tower we came,
Up roved our eyes its summit to survey,
Caught by a signal from a double flame.
Afar, another answering beacon burned
Dimly and distant, almost out of sight.
Unto that Sea of knowledge then I turned,
And questioned him: "What means this lofty light?
And who may those who fire yon cresset be?"
"Yonder," said Virgil, "on the slimy bog,

What is about to happen thou shalt see,
Unless the fen conceal it with its fog."

Never an arrow bounded from a string,
Whizzing so lightly through the upper air,
As I beheld a bark, a little thing,
Cleave the thick clouded flood, and toward us bear.
A single pilot steered it o'er the wave,
Who cried: "Art come, dark spirit and abhorred?"
"Phlegyas! Phlegyas! vainly dost thou rave;
Bootless, this time, thy clamor," said my Lord;
"We are thine only while thou row'st across."
Like one who inly grumbleth, when he hears
Of some foul fraud whereby he suffereth loss,
Grim Phlegyas in his gathering rage appears.
Then with my Guide I stepped aboard the bark,
Which, till my entering, seemed devoid of weight:
Soon as I trod that vessel old and dark,
The prow cut deeper with the unwonted freight.

As thus we ploughed through that dead sea of slime,
One rose before me, all begrimed with clay,
Growling: "Who 'rt thou, who com'st before thy time?"
"To come," I answered him, "is not to stay.
But who art thou, so hideous in thy pain?"
"You see," he muttered, "I am one who mourn."

"Curst spirit!" I answered, "in thy pangs remain;
I know thee, even thus filthy and forlorn."
'Gainst us both hands he lifted, with a frown;
Wary of which, the Master thrust him back,
Crying: "Detested dog! down with thee, down!
Go, beastly wretch, and join thy fellow-pack."
Then round about my neck his arms he threw,
And kissed me, saying: "Thou indignant soul,
Blessèd within whose womb thy burden grew!
On earth, his arrogance brooked no control;
No gleam of goodness to his memory clings;
Thence raves he thus forever, mad with wrath:
And oh, what numbers now are mighty kings,
Who here, like swine, must wallow in this bath!
What execration shall their memories wake!"
"Master," said I, "my wish 't would mainly please,
Before we disembark from this black lake,
To see him, weltering, plunged beneath its lees."

He thus rejoined: "Before we come much nigher
To yonder shore, which is not yet in sight,
Thou shalt enjoy the full of thy desire,
And witness what will give thy soul delight."
So, shortly, I beheld that loathsome race
On the foul ghost with horrid fury fall;
For which my thanks I render to God's grace.

"Philip Argenti! at him! each and all!"
This was their cry; the frantic Florentine
With his own teeth his limbs in anguish tore,
Helplessly raging 'gainst his foes obscene.
We left the miscreant here: of him no more.

Now lamentations loud my hearing stun;
Forward I send mine unimpeded eye,
While thus my gracious Master: "Now, my son,
To the dark walls of Dis we're drawing nigh;
There the sad residents by myriads grieve."
"O Master mine! its minarets and spires
Plain from yon valley, peering, I perceive,
Vermilioned o'er, as rising out of fires."
"As thou descriest," he answered, "they are dyed
By inward fires, in this low Hell unquenched."
So up the ditches we began to glide,
Which that disconsolate domain intrenched.

The dismal town meseemed was iron-walled:
A great way round we struggled through the scum,
Until arrived where loud the helmsman bawled:
"Out with ye! to the entrance ye are come."
Then I beheld toward those dark portals drive
More than a thousand hurled from heaven, who said
In angry tones, "Who 's this that still alive
Invades the gloomy kingdom of the dead?"

Here my sage Master those proud spirits becked,
That privately with them he fain would talk;
Whereat, their contumely slightly checked,
They said: "Walk hither, then, but singly walk.
Let him so rashly venturing to this reign
By his own wit retrace his foolish road:
Ay, let him try! thou only shalt remain
Who guard'st him through this terrible abode."
Think, reader, how I shuddered, as I heard
The surly speech of that accursèd crew;
Foreboding sadly from each bitter word
That nevermore the sunlight I should view.
"O my dear Guide! whose kindly hand," I said,
"Through perils infinite and foes unknown,
More than seven times my faltering feet has led,
Leave me not now all helpless and alone!
Since further progress is to us denied,
Together quickly let us travel back."
Whereat my Leader and my Lord replied:
"Fear not: our destined course no power can slack;
'T is not for them to stop what Heaven ordains;
Abide thou here, while I to greet them go.
Cheer up! let hope invigorate thy veins:
I 'll not desert thee in this world below."

The gentle Father leaves me here behind,
To speak with them, while I remain in doubt

With *no* and *yes* contending in my mind;
Nor could I hear what they conferred about:
But with our foes he did not long debate,
For they, their swiftness putting to the proof,
Rushed back, and bolted in his face the gate:
Returned he then to where I stood aloof.
Slowly, with fitful pace, and drooping lids,
And downcast brow, he came, and sighing spake:
"Who to yon dreary walls my way forbids?"
Then unto me: "What though mine ire they wake
Fear not but in this contest I shall win,
Let them against me struggle ne'er so hard:
This gang ere now as insolent hath been
Up at that portal found for aye unbarred.
Its fatal dark inscription thou hast read;
And even now, descending by the slope,
Comes, without escort, through the circles dread,
One whose proud hand this region's gate shall ope."

CANTO THE NINTH.

THE craven color which my face had shown,
When sadly back I saw my Leader glide,
Soon checked the transient flushing of his own;
Hearkening he stood, intent and eager-eyed.
But ill his gaze could fathom that thick air
As thus he spake: "In this approaching fray

Conquer we must, unless — but why despair?
Such help will come. Oh, wearisome delay!"

I noted well how his conclusion veiled
The doubtful words wherewith his speech began,
So that the tenor of the sentence failed;
And through my heart a timid tremor ran,
For haply to his halting phrase I gave
A worse construction than the Poet meant.
"Say, to this depth of misery's concave,
From the first round makes any soul descent
Of them whose only pain is hope's suspense?"
To this inquiry thus my Lord replied:
"Rarely doth one of us, reprieved from thence,
Tread the dark way through which thy steps I guide.
Soon after I forsook my mortal part,
'T is true that hither once I chanced to stray,
Compelled by fell Erictho, her whose art
Could conjure back dead spirits to their clay:
At her behest, I passed through yonder wall
To lead one from the round where Judas dwells;
The most removed from heaven that circleth all;
The deepest, darkest, worst, of all the hells.
I know the road: thy vain mistrust forbear;
The marsh o'er which these noisome vapors brood
Girdles and guards the City of Despair,
Where, without strife, none ever can intrude."

Yet more he said, which I remember not,
Having been wholly ravished by mine eye,
Toward the tower's top, which glistened crimson-hot,
While flashed in sight three hell-born fiends on high:
Furies, blood-stained, female in limbs and air;
About their waists were greenest hydras wound;
Horned snakes and vipers formed their horrid hair,
Dangling in braids their savage temples round.
Then he who well the haggard handmaids knew
Of everlasting sorrow's doleful queen,
Exclaimed: "Look there! yon fierce Erinnyds view:
Megæra yonder on thy left is seen;
There, on thy right, the sad Alecto wails;
Betwixt them scowls Tisiphone." This spoke,
He ceased. They tore their bosoms with their nails,
Sore bruised themselves, and hideous outcries woke.
Close to the gentle Bard I clung dismayed.
"Bring forth Medusa! turn the wretch to stone!
The assault of Theseus we too poorly paid!"
Thus, glaring down, all shrieked with threatening tone.
"Turn!" cried the Poet, "cover quick thine eyes!
Shouldst thou but glance upon the Gorgon's head,
Never again couldst thou behold the skies."

My hands distrusting, with his own instead
He turned me round from their vindictive ire,
And with his shadowy fingers veiled my gaze.
O ye whose intellects are sound! admire
The mystic meaning my strange verse conveys.

Swept now amain those turbid waters o'er
A tumult of a dread, portentous kind,
Which rocked with sudden spasms each trembling shore,
Like the mad rushing of a rapid wind,
As when, made furious by opposing heats,
Wild through the wood the unbridled tempest scours,
Dusty and proud, the cringing forest beats,
And scatters far the broken limbs and flowers;
Then fly the herds, the swains to shelter scud.
Freeing mine eyes, "Thy sight," he said, "direct
O'er the long-standing scum of yonder flood,
Where, most condense, its acrid steams collect."

As frogs before their enemy the snake,
Quick-scattering through the pool in timid shoals,
On the dank ooze a huddling cluster make,
I saw above a thousand ruined souls
Flying from one who passed the Stygian bog,
With feet unmoistened by the sludgy wave;
Oft from his face his left hand brushed the fog

Whose weight alone, it seemed, annoyance gave.
At once the messenger of Heaven I kenned,
And toward my Master turned, who made a sign
That hushed I should remain and lowly bend.
Ah me, how full he looked of scorn divine!

He reached the portals; with a little rod
Touched them: unbolted, instantly, they flew;
Then, on the horrid threshold as he trod,
"O Heaven-expelled!" he 'gan, "accursed crew!
What frantic pitch of insolence is this?
Why vainly kick against the Will supreme,
Whose mighty aim was never known to miss,
Who to your pangs adds oft a new extreme?
Hope ye, in fighting with the fates, to win?
Your Cerberus, bethink ye, to this day,
Bears he not hairless his galled throat and chin?"
This said, he journeyed back his loathsome way.
Nor did he deign to notice us, but wore
The look of one whom graver cares weigh down
Than any heed of whom he stands before:
Securely then advanced we toward the town.

His hallowed words fresh confidence inspired;
The gates we passed without a farther fray;
And I, who curiously to see desired
Their state who pent in such a stronghold lay,
Soon as I entered, sent my gaze around:

And lo! a champaign vast on every side,
Where guilty torments reign, and griefs abound,
I mark with wonder, stretching far and wide.
Even as at Arles, where spreads the stagnant Rhone,
Or as at Pola, where Quarnaro's waves
Bathe and bound Italy, the fields are strewn
And rendered ridgy with a thousand graves,
So, though more horrible, this region seemed;
For here 'mid sepulchres were sprinkled fires,
Wherewith the enkindled tombs all-burning gleamed:
Metal more fiercely hot no art requires.
Their lids were all suspended, whence arose
Distressful groans and murmurs of lament,
As though from wretches plunged in direst woes.
"Master," said I, "what sinners here lie pent?
What buried race thus mutter from the vaults?"
He answered thus: "The arch-heretics behold!
Leaders of sects, with all who shared their faults.
More than thou think'st these crowded caves infold:
Here like with like, each with his kind inurned,
In tortures more or less intense are cast."
So saying, to the right my Master turned,
Then 'twixt the tombs and lofty towers we passed.

CANTO THE TENTH.

Now by a narrow path my Master winds,
Conducting me 'twixt those tormenting tombs
And the town walls. "O thou whose goodness finds
A passage for me through these impious glooms!
Say, sovereign Wisdom! satisfy my hope.
May man behold the wretches buried here
In these dire sepulchres? The lids are ope,
Each hangs upraised; and none is watching near."

To this he answered: "When they come at last,
Clothed in their now forsaken frames of clay,
From dread Jehoshaphat (the Judgment past),
These flaming dens must all be barred for aye.
Here in their cemetery, on this side,
With his whole sect is Epicurus pent,
Who thought the spirit with its body died.
Soon, therefore, thy desire shall be content,
Ay, and that wish which thou conceal'st from me."
"Good Guide," I said, "I only veil my heart,
Lest of mine utterance I appear too free:
Thyself my monitor of silence art."
"O Tuscan! thou who com'st with gentle speech,
Through Hell's hot city, breathing from the earth,
Stop in this place one moment, I beseech;
Thy tongue betrays the country of thy birth.

Of that illustrious land I know thee sprung,
Which in my day, perchance, I somewhat vexed."
Forth from one vault these sudden accents rung,
So that I, trembling, stood with fear perplexed.
Then as I closer to my Master drew:
"Turn back! what dost thou?" he exclaimed in haste:
"See! Farinata rises to thy view;
Now mayst behold him upward from his waist."

Full in his face already I was gazing,
While his front lowered, and his proud bosom swelled,
As though even there, amid his burial blazing,
The infernal realm in high disdain he held.
My Leader then, with ready hands and bold,
Forced me toward him, among the graves, to pace,
Saying: "Thy thought in open words unfold."
So by his tomb I stood, beside its base.

Glancing upon me with a scornful air,
"Who were thine ancestors?" he coldly asked.
Willing to answer, I did not forbear
My name or lineage, but the whole unmasked.
Slightly the spirit raised his haughty brows,
And said: "Thy sires to mine were aye adverse,
To me, and to the cause I did espouse;

Wherefore their legions twice did I disperse."
"What though they banished were? They all returned,
Each time of their expulsion," I replied;
"That is an art thy party never learned!"
Hereat arose a shadow at his side.

Uplifted on his knees he seemed to me,
For his face only to his chin was bare;
And round about he stared, as though to see
If other mortal with myself were there.
But, when that momentary dream was o'er,
Weeping he groaned: "If thou this dungeon dim,
Led by thy soaring genius, dost explore,
Where is my son? ah, wherefore bring'st not him?"

"Not of myself I seek this realm forlorn:
He who waits yonder marshals me my road;
Whom once, perchance, thy Guido had in scorn."
My recognition thus I fully showed;
For in the pangs on that poor sinner wreaked,
And in his question, plain his name I read.
Suddenly starting up, "What! what!" he shrieked,
"Sayest thou, 'he had'? what mean ye? is he dead?
Doth heaven's dear light his eye no longer bless?"

Perceiving how I hesitated then,
Ere I responded to his wild address,
Backward he sunk, nor looked he forth again.

But that proud soul who first compelled my stay
The same unalterable aspect wore,
Moved not his neck, nor turned him either way;
Stood fixed; then thus continued as before:
"And if that art my brethren could not learn,
It more torments me than this fiery couch;
Yet, fifty times ere Luna's visage burn,
How hard that lesson is, thyself shalt vouch.
But tell me, I implore thee,— so mayst thou
In the sweet world for evermore remain!—
Why that vindictive people still avow,
In all their laws, their hatred of my strain?"

I thus: "The carnage and the vast defeat,
Which dyed the waters of the Arbia red,
Provoke such edicts from our judgment-seat."
Hereat the spirit sighed, and shook his head.
"Not singly," he replied, "in arms I rose,
Nor without reason, for the cause was just;
But once I singly stood, when all her foes
Would fain have laid my Florence in the dust:
Then I, alone, opposed that base decree."
"Prithee," said I, "this complicated knot
Resolve, and set my tangled reason free,

So be a long repose thy children's lot!
If rightly I conceive you, it appears
Your eyes foresee whatever time's dark hand
Is leading forward in the lapse of years,
Yet of the present naught ye understand."

"True," he rejoined: "we see indeed, like those
Whose vision is imperfect, things afar;
Thus much of light the Lord of light bestows.
To all near objects wholly blind we are,
And nothing know we of your human state
Save some one else our ignorance advise:
So, when for aye is shut the future's gate,
Know, from that instant all our knowledge dies."

Then, with repentance for my slowness wrung,
"Tell," I entreated, "yonder fallen shade,
His son still walks the breathing world among,
And tell him why mine answer I delayed:
Say that my mind with misconceit was dim,
Whereof thy teaching now has cleared my thought."
Here my Conductor called me back to him;
Hastily then the spirit I besought:
"Say, with thyself what fellow-sufferers herd?"
"Upward," he answered, "of a thousand more.
The second Frederic is here interred,
The Cardinal too; the rest I 'll not name o'er."

He vanished here; and toward the ancient Bard
I paced, much pondering what the sentence meant,
Which, as it seemed, foretold a doom so hard.
He too moved onward, whispering as he went:
"Wherefore so pensive? so bewildered why?"
When the hid reason of my care I told,
The Sage thus counseled: "That dark prophecy,
I charge thee, still in thy remembrance hold.
And mark thou this" (he raised his finger here),
"When thou shalt stand before the gentle ray
Of her to whose fair eye all things are clear,
Thy life's whole pilgrimage will she display."
To the left hand my Master turned him then:
Quitting the wall, we toward the centre wound,
By a small path, descending to a glen
Whence a foul stench, uprising, floated round.

CANTO THE ELEVENTH.

On the steep margin of a circling row
Of broken rocks, that formed a lofty bank,
We came above a crueler mass of woe
In the deep gulf that steamed forth vapors rank.
To shun the foul excess, we drew behind
A huge tomb's lid, whereon these words I read:
"I hold Pope Anastasius here confined,
Whom from the ways of truth Photinus led."

"Slowly," said Virgil, "must we now descend,
That, somewhat first familiar grown thereby,
Our hardened sense these fumes may less offend."
"Yet let no time be therefore lost," said I:
"Some compensation find for this delay."
"Mark, then, my son; for I thereof was thinking.
Within these rocks," proceeded he to say,
"Three circles lie, in due gradation sinking,
Resembling those above, but less in size:
With condemned spirits crowded are they all;
That whose mere sight hereafter may suffice,
Hear how and wherefore they are held in thrall.
The end of each bad act abhorred of Heaven
Is other's wrong, by violence or guile,
But, since mankind alone to fraud is given,
That sin is in the esteem of God more vile;
Therefore the fraudulent are down more deep,
Suffering the penance of severer woes.
The violent the whole first circle keep,
Which three less rounds distinguish and compose;
For man by force three persons may offend:
Himself, his God, his neighbor, he may wrong,
I mean (as clearly thou shalt comprehend)
Them, or whatever doth to them belong.
His neighbor's person he may violate
By deadly strokes, by agonizing wounds;
May waste or burn or plunder his estate:
Hence the first ring with homicides abounds,

Therein assassins, thieves, and plunderers hive,
Tormented all, and classed in various bands.
Man, too, himself of being may deprive,
Or on his own goods lay destructive hands:
In the succeeding round all such repent,
Who, in your world, their being dare destroy,
Who see God's noble gifts ignobly spent,
Yea, dwell in misery, where they should enjoy.
Lastly, the Deity is wronged by them,
Who, in the covert of their secret hearts,
Blaspheme Him, or deny Him, or contemn
Nature, and all the gifts her grace imparts.
Therefore the last division sets its seal
On all whose hearts gainsay God's holy laws:
Cahors and Sodom shall its vengeance feel.

"Now, as for fraud, which every conscience gnaws,
This wrong in twofold way a man may do,
On him who doth, or who doth not confide:
The latter manner, it is plain, breaks through
The bond of love, which Nature's hand hath tied.
Hence the next circle hypocrites infest,
Dealers in magic, and all bartering knaves;
There simony and robbery have their nest;
Panderers and flatterers; all such filthy slaves.
The other mode not only holds in scorn
Love's native instinct, but the acquired good-will
Whereof a special confidence is born.

Thence, in the least and lowest circle still,
Where, in the centre of the world, Dis reigns,
Traitors in flame for evermore consume."
"Master," said I, "thy clearness well explains
This gulf, its people, and their various doom:
But say: those wretches in the unctuous marsh;
Those whom the gale drives; those the rains torment;
And those who clashing meet with language harsh,
Why not within the fiery city pent?
Why, if the Almighty holds them in His wrath?
If not, then wherefore in such pangs confined?"

"Whither," he answered, "from its wonted path
Of reason, wanders thy distracted mind?
Hast thou the memorable words forgot,
Wherein thy Ethic volume treats of three
Ill-dispositions Heaven approveth not,
Incontinence, malice, mad brutality?
And how incontinence doth less offend
Almighty God, less culpable by far?
If to this doctrine thou attention lend,
Remembering who those other sinners are
(Those that above in late repentance pine),
Thou shalt perceive why torments less severe
Have been assigned them by the Judge divine,
And why they 're separate from the wicked here."
"O Sun! who purgest each beclouded sight,

Thy clear solution satisfies me so
That doubt and knowledge equally delight;
Yet back, I pray thee, for a little, go!
Thou said'st before that usury offends
Goodness divine: this knot now disengage."

"Philosophy," said he, "this lesson lends
To him who searcheth, in full many a page,
That Nature ever in her course pursues
The mode of action of the Sovereign Mind;
And, if thy physics rightly thou peruse,
This truth, ere many pages, thou shalt find:
That, as a pupil in his master's course,
Your art strives after Nature, as it were
Grandchild of God from whom it hath its source.
By these, if thou to Genesis refer,
God said that man must live, and raise his race.
Now, from this law the usurer doth depart,
His best hope building upon something base:
Therefore both Nature he contemns and art.

"But follow me: my feet impatient are.
Above the horizon's verge the Fishes leap;
All o'er the northwest spreads the glittering Car,
And far our path declines down yonder steep."

CANTO THE TWELFTH.

The cliff we came to, where our passage lay,
Was rough and Alpine, and an object bore
Which every eye had shrunk from in dismay;
For, like the fallen mass which struck the shore
Of trembling Adige, on this side of Trent,
Ill-propped, or loosened by some earthquake, so
That from the summit whence the rock was rent
Some way is opened to the vale below.
Such was the steep; so pathless, and so rude;
And o'er it, stretched upon the broken pile,
There lay the adulterate heifer's loathsome brood,
The shame, the monster, of the Cretan isle.
He gnawed his limbs, observing us advance,
Like one from inward rage that seeks relief,
Whereat my sage Conductor cried: "Perchance
Thou deemest this to be the Athenian chief
Who shed thy life-blood in the world above.
Brute thing, avaunt! This visitant with me
Comes not befriended by thy sister's love:
He only comes your punishments to see."
As doth a bullock, plunging, when he feels
The deadly stroke that brings him to the ground,
Who cannot go, but sidelong springs and reels,
So did I see the Minotaur reel round.
"Run!" cried my wary Lord, "while thus in wrath;

Best thou make speed; betake thee to the strait."
So down we clambered, and the rocky path
Oft shook beneath my feet's unwonted weight.

Pensive I went; and my observant Sage
Addressed me thus: "Perchance thy thought is filled
With this vast ruin, guarded by the rage
Of the fell beast whose fury I have stilled.
Now learn, that when I traveled here of old,
Down this way to the depths of lower Hell,
This precipice was not, as you behold,
Shattered and rent; but, if I rightly spell,
Just ere He came who bore the spoil from Dis,
Of the first circle, ransomed, up above,
So shook throughout this deep and foul abyss,
Methought the universe was seized with Love,
Which oft, as some believe, with violent shock
Hath into chaos changed again the world;
And here, and more elsewhere, this ancient rock,
At that dread moment, was in fragments hurled.
But gaze down yonder: we approach the flood
Where all, who violent 'gainst others were,
Welter and writhe in waves of boiling blood."

O foolish wrath! blind passion! O thou spur
That goadest us through life's brief scene of being,
And after plungest us in endless woe!

A moat I saw, with Virgil's words agreeing,
Of ample width and bending like a bow:
While thus it seemed to compass all the plain,
Between it and the precipice's base
Ran Centaurs armed with arrows, in a train,
As, in the world, they once pursued the chase.

They stopped at seeing us advance; and three
Rushed with their bows (their arrows choosing
first),
And one cried out afar off: "What seek ye?
What destined round adown the cliff accursed?
Speak where you stand, or else I pull the cord."
"Not unto thee, to Chiron there alone,
Will we give answer," thus replied my Lord:
"Thy will to rashness evermore was prone."
Then, touching me, he said: "'T is Nessus; look!
Who for the beauteous Dejanira dying,
Himself full vengeance for his murder took.
Behold the middle one, his bosom eying:
That is great Chiron, who Achilles bred;
And yon is Pholus, erst so full of ire.
By thousands thus about the streamlet's bed
They gallop, shooting each that riseth higher
Than his offense permits him to ascend."
As nearer to those agile beasts we drew,
Grim Chiron, with an arrow's feathered end,
Behind his jaws his long beard backward threw.

As thus his giant mouth the monster showed,
"Do ye perceive," he to his comrades said,
"The one behind in walking shakes the road?
Not so are wont the footsteps of the dead!"

Then my good Escort standing at his breast,
Where the two natures, fiend and beast, unite,
Replied: "I bring a solitary guest,
Alive, indeed, to show this vale of night.
Fated he comes; but not for pleasure's sake
She from her heavenly hallelujahs came
Who bade me this new duty undertake;
No robber he, nor I a soul of shame.
But by that virtue whence I venture thus
Over a road so wild, so unexplored,
One of thy band vouchsafe to go with us,
And show us where the river we may ford;
And on his back this being let him take,
Who is no spirit through the air to glide."
Then towards his right breast, Chiron turned and spake,
Saying to Nessus: "Back! and be his guide!
Keep them aloof, if other troops you cross."
So onward with our trusty guard we went
Along the brink of the red-seething fosse,
Whence bitter shrieks the boiling wretches sent.

Up to their brows I saw them in the wave.

"Tyrants those are," the mighty Centaur said,
"Who their fell hearts to blood and plunder gave:
Here, for their cruelties, vain tears they shed.
There 's Alexander; Dionysius there,
Long years of woe for Sicily who made;
That forehead yonder with the raven hair
Is Azzolino; that of lighter shade
Is Obyson of Este, whom 't is true
His stepson murdered in the world on high."
I turned me to the Bard, who said: "To you
Be now the Centaur first; the second, I."
A little farther on, the Centaur stopped
Over against a sunken people, shown
To the throat only, which the stream o'ertopped:
There one he pointed out, retired alone.
"He struck in God's own bosom," Virgil said,
"The heart which men by Thamis yet revere."
Then others I observed, who let their head
And their whole chest above the tide appear.
Many I knew whom there I chanced to meet;
And the ditch dwindled more and more away,
Until it scarcely covered o'er the feet:
Here o'er the bloody brook our passage lay.

"As on this side," the Centaur said, "thou see'st,
More and more shallow still the streamlet grows,
So upon this its depth is aye increased,
Till back to where the tyrants groan it flows.

There divine Justice punishes the Kings
Pyrrhus and Attila, earth's ancient scourge;
And Sextus too; nay, tears eternal wrings
(By the sharp anguish of this boiling surge),
Eternal tears from Rinier Pazzo's eyes,
And Rinier da Corneto, who of yore
Filled all the highways with their butcheries."
Here he turned back, and crossed the ford once more.

CANTO THE THIRTEENTH.

Ere Nessus had regained the other shore,
We reached a desolate untrodden wood:
No verdant leaves, but inky black it bore;
No smooth straight branches, but all gnarled and rude;
No fruit hung there, but only poisonous thorn.
The savage beasts, that, in the wilderness
Betwixt Corneto and the Cècina, scorn
The farms and fields, less rough a brake possess.
Amid the branches of this dismal grove,
Their loathsome nests the brutal Harpies build,
Who from the Strophades the Trojans drove
With woeful auguries erelong fulfilled.
Huge wings they have, men's faces, human throats,
Feet armed with claws, vast bellies clothed with plumes:

From those strange trees they pour their dolefu
notes.
"Now, ere thou further penetrate these glooms,"
Said my good Master, "thou shouldst understand
Thou 'rt in the second circlet, and shalt be,
Until thou com'st upon the horrid sand.
Give good heed then: more wonders thou shalt see,
Yea, to confirm all stories I have told."
On every side I heard heart-rending cries,
But not a person could I there behold:
Wherefore I stopped, bewildered with surprise.
He seemed to guess I thought the voices came
From some that hiding in the thicket lay:
Therefore my Leader said: "If thou but maim
One of these plants, yea, pluck a branch away,
Then shall thy judgment be more just than now."
Therefore my hand I slightly forward reached;
And while I wrenched away a little bough
From a huge trunk, "Why mangle me?" it
screeched.
Then, as the dingy tears began to start,
"Why dost thou tear me?" shrieked the trunk
again,
"Hast thou no touch of pity in thy heart?
We that now here are planted, once were men;
But, were we serpents' souls, thy hand might
shame
To have no more compassion on our woes!"

Like a green log, that hisses in the flame,
Groaning at one end, as the other glows,
Even as the wind comes sputtering forth, I say,
Thus oozed together from the splintered wood
Both words and blood. I dropped the broken spray,
And, like a coward, faint and trembling stood.

"O injured spirit!" thus replied my Sage,
"Could but this faithless mortal have believed
What he hath read in my poetic page,
He had not thus thy groaning fibres grieved.
I bade him, since thy fate belief transcends,
Even though it pained myself, thy branches tear;
That he on earth may make thee some amends.
Who wast thou? Tell! He will requite thee there:
Through him on high thy fame shall freshly shine."
The trunk replied: "Thy pleasant words compel,
As by a charm, my voice to answer thine.
Oh, let me yield a little to the spell!

"Know, I am he that once of Frederic's heart
Held the two keys, and turned them as I chose,
Opening and shutting it with such sweet art,
He to none else his secrets would disclose.
In my high office with such zeal I burned
That my life's blood I made a sacrifice;
But ah! the strumpet, she who never turned

From Cæsar's household her voluptuous eyes,
Envy, the common death and vice of courts,
Kindled with hate of me the hearts of all,
Who fired the Emperor so with false reports
That my glad honors turned to sorrow's gall.
Therefore my mind, resolving in disgust
By death to 'scape disgrace and slander there,
Made me, a just man, to myself unjust.
But, by this thorn-tree's new-grown roots, I swear
Never did I mine honored lord deceive:
Should either of you from this world below
Return to earth, let him my fame retrieve,
Which mangled lies beneath fell envy's blow."

The Poet waited for a while, and then
Said: "Lose no time, since he hath ended now:
Wouldst thou hear further, question him again."
"Rather," I answered him, "continue thou.
Ask what thou think'st would satisfy me most;
But I for very pity must forbear."
Then Virgil thus: "O thou imprisoned ghost!
So may this mortal freely grant thy prayer,
As thou to him shalt furthermore unfold
How in these knots the tortured soul is bound;
And if by any, from the cruel hold
Of these gnarled limbs, escape is ever found."
Hereat the trunk heaved forth a heavy sigh;
And soon these words articulate became:

"To your inquiry take this brief reply.
When the mad soul tears off its mortal frame,
To the seventh gulf by Minos it is sped,
And in this wood where'er by fortune cast,
Sprouts like a barley-corn, and rears its head,
Grown to a sapling and wild plant at last.
The Harpies then, which on its foliage prey,
Cause it to groan, and give its groans escape:
We shall return, like others, for our clay,
But none shall clothe him with his former shape.
Man ought to lose what he away hath flung:
Hither our bodies we must drag to be
Around this melancholy forest hung,
Each on his guilty spirit's thorny tree."

We waited, thinking he had spoken more,
When, as a hunter from his ambush sees
The hunt rush headlong by, and frantic boar,
And hears the noisy hounds and crashing trees,
Thus, at a sudden sound, we stood aghast;
As lo! two wretches from the left there drove,
Shattering the impeding branches as they passed,
Bleeding and scratched and naked, through the grove.
"Death!" cried the foremost, "to the rescue! fly!"
The other, vexed that he less fleetly went,
Cried: "Lano! not so swiftly didst thou ply

Those legs of thine at Toppo's tournament."
Then, as if wanting wind, he stopped, and formed
A single group there with a stunted plant;
While close behind them all the forest swarmed
With grim black bitches, following fierce and gaunt.
Like greyhounds rushing from the leash, they darted,
And fastening on the wretch who lurking lay,
Piecemeal his limbs with greedy fangs they parted,
And bore the quivering fragments far away.

Then did mine Escort lead me toward the spot
Where through its wounds the bramble vainly cried:
"O Jacopo da Sant' Andrea! what
Avails it thee behind my stem to hide?
Must I thy guilty life's just doom partake?"
Hereat my Lord, pausing the trunk before,
Said: "Who art thou, from whom at many a break
Such bitter words come gushing with thy gore?"
He thus: "Ye spirits! who have come to see
The shameful wreck which thus my leaves hath shred,
Restore them to the foot of my sad tree.
Know, in that city I was born and bred
Which for the Baptist her first patron lost,
Mars; who for that shall work her every ill!
And well for her, where Arno's wave is crossed,
Some relic of him is remaining still,

Or else the citizens, who reared again
The walls which Attila in ashes laid,
Would have expended all their toil in vain.
Of mine own roof-tree I my gibbet made."

CANTO THE FOURTEENTH.

My native land's dear memory had such force
That the strewn leaves I gathered from the ground,
For him whom speaking now had rendered hoarse.
Then came we to the second circlet's bound,
Where it is parted from the third; and here
Justice a horrid vengeance hath contrived
First, then, to manifest these wonders clear,
I say beside a sand-plain we arrived,
On whose waste bed no living stem there grows,
Being encompassed by the woeful wood,
As round the wood the ditch of misery flows:
Here, on its very verge, we pausing stood.
The soil was only one thick arid sand;
Even like the shore by Cato's footsteps trod,
Such was the semblance of this wretched land.
O thou dread vengeance of the Eternal God!
How shouldst thou thrill each mortal's heart with awe,
Who reads what anguish there appalled mine eyes!

Full many a herd of naked ghosts I saw,
All howling hideously most piteous cries.
To these there seemed a various doom allotted;
For some supine were stretched upon the ground,
Others upon their haunches crouched and squatted,
And some incessantly went round and round.
The latter formed more numerous a crowd
Than those who down in agony had lain;
But these were in their outcries far most loud.
O'er all the sand slow fell a burning rain;
Wide-floating flakes of fire, resembling snow
Among the Alps, when hushed is every flaw.
As Alexander, where the sunbeams glow
Hottest in India, o'er his army saw
From heaven to earth the living cinders leap,
And bade his soldiers trample on the ground,
Lest, if allowed to gather in a heap,
To quench them might more difficult be found;
So fell the eternal fire, which, as it lighted,
To double their distress, inflamed the sands,
Like tinder by the stricken steel ignited:
Restless the motion was of wretched hands!
This way and that, as still they freshly fell,
The scorching torments fast aside they brushed;
And I: "O Master! thou whose power could quell
All save the stubborn fiends who 'gainst us rushed
(Those that opposed our entrance at the gate),
Say, who is yonder prostrate giant grim,

Writhing in scorn there of his fiery fate,
As though the tempest served to harden him?"

He then himself exclaimed, on hearing me
Concerning him of my good Guide inquire:
"What once I was, continue I to be
In death as life. Though Jove his workman tire,
From whom he snatched the bitter bolt he threw
At me upon my final day of doom;
Though, one by one, he tire the others too,
At the black furnace down in Ætna's womb,
Crying, as erst he did at Phlegra's fight:
'Help me, good Vulcan! help me, I entreat!'
Yea, though he blast me with his fiercest might,
Exult he may, but not in my defeat!"
My Leader hereupon more loudly spake
Than ever I had heard his voice before:
"O Capaneus! that pride of thine doth make,
That pride unquenchable, thy torment more.
No martyrdom save thine own fury, none,
Could fitly match thy madness or thy crime."
Then unto me more mildly: "That was one
Of the seven kings at Thebes i' the olden time.
He had, and still he seemeth to retain,
Small reverence for his God, even here in hell;
But, as I said, that frenzy of disdain
Torments him yet, his breast becoming well.

"But follow now behind me; take good heed
Lest in the burning sand thy feet thou set,
And ever close beside the wood proceed."
So, silently we reached a streamlet's jet,
Down through the sand, forth from the forest rus-
ing,
Whose crimson still I shudder to describe.
Even like the brook from Bulicame gushing,
Which the frail women share among their tribe,
So glided this: its pendent banks, its bed,
And, on each hand, its margins, were of stone:
So I perceived thereby our passage led.
"Of all the wonders I to thee have shown
Since first we passed the gate whose gloomy sill
Mortal was ne'er forbidden to pass o'er,
Naught worthier notice than this present rill
Has been presented to thine eyes before;
For over that the cinders all expire."
So spake my Leader; wherefore I besought
That, having made me greedy with desire,
He might tell all I hungered to be taught.

"In the mid-ocean spreads a dreary waste,"
He answered thus, — "a barren land, called Crete
Under whose king the antique world lived chaste;
Therein Mount Ida lifts its lofty seat.
Once in green gladness, full of springs, it rose;
Now all deserted, as a thing outworn:

This for a faithful cradle Rhea chose,
Where she might hide her little Jove, new-born,
So with wild shouts she drowned his infant cries.
Here hath a huge old form his mountain-home;
His back towards Damiata turned, his eyes,
As in a mirror, looking straight at Rome.
His head of fine gold is a shapen mass;
Of purest silver are his arms and breast;
Thence to the middle he is made of brass;
Thence downward, of choice iron all the rest,
Save the right foot, which, rather than the left,
He stands erect on; that is baked of clay;
And every part, except the gold, is cleft
With a deep flaw, distilling tears for aye.
These gathering there, the stream a passage picks
Through the dark grot, and down this valley leaps;
Then, forming first the Acheron and Styx
And Phlegethon, through this close conduit creeps:
Thus ever sinking, till they can no more,
The weary waters in Cocytus end.
But of that famous fen I say no more;
Thyself shalt witness it when we descend."

"If then," I answered, "as thy words assert,
This rill a passage from our world hath found,
Why first appears it on this sandy skirt?"
"Thou know'st," he answered, "the abyss is round;
And though so far thou to the left hast strayed,

Seeking the bottom of the infernal spheres,
Not yet the circuit hast thou wholly made;
So marvel not if something new appears."
Then I: "O Master! where is Lethe's tide?
Where Phlegethon? Thou tellest naught of one,
And say'st the other from that rain doth glide."
Said he: "Thy questions please me all, my son;
And yet the bubbling of that crimson wave
Might have solved one: and Lethe thou shalt see
Beyond this fosse, where spirits go to lave,
When by repentance from their crimes set free.
But from the wood 't is time we now retire:
Follow! and close behind my footsteps tread;
The banks afford a road secure from fire:
Over them, too, the vaporous flame is dead."

CANTO THE FIFTEENTH.

One of that streamlet's firm and stony flanks
Now forms our path; its gathering fumes o'ershade,
And shield from fire, the water and its banks.
Such are the ramparts by the Flemings made,
'Twixt Bruges and Cadsand, to repel the tide
Whose floods they fear their marshy land may drown;
Or as the dikes that by the Brenta side
The Paduans raise to fence each tower and town,

Ere Chiarentana's top begins to warm:
Such, though less large and lofty they appeared,
Was of these solid banks the general form,
Whatever master-hand the fabrics reared.

Already so far we had left the wood
That, had I turned about me, looking back,
I could not have descried it whence I stood;
When, lo! there met us, close beside our track,
A troop of spirits. Each amid the band
Eyed us, as men at eve a passer-by
'Neath a new moon; as closely us they scanned
As an old tailor doth his needle's eye.
One recognized me, of this tribe that gazed,
And cried, the while he caught me by the gown:
"What wonder 's this?" So when his arm he raised,
On his baked face I looked intently down.
Thus his burnt visage could not quite prevent
His form from coming to my memory clear;
And towards his features as my head I bent,
I answered: "Ser Brunetto, are you here?"

"O my dear son! be not displeased," said he,
"If old Brunetto from his train depart,
And travel back a little way with thee."
"That I entreat," said I, "with all my heart:
Nay, I 'll sit with you, if he there advise

With whom I go." — "Son, whoso of our band
Stops but one instant, for a century lies
Beat by this fire, unsheltered and unfanned.
Therefore move onward: to thy garment's hem
I will but come, then troop again with those
My sad companions, whom their crimes condemn
To go bemoaning their eternal woes."
I, since I did not from our pathway dare
Descend to him, inclined my drooping head,
Like one that walks with reverential air.
Then he: "What destiny or chance hath led
Thee hither, ere thy final day, to rove?
And who is this that marshals thee the way?"
"In the serene existence there above,"
I answered, "in a vale, I went astray.
'T was ere the fullness of mine age; I turned
But yester morn my back upon the glen;
Returning so, this Being I discerned
Who by this road conducts me home again."

Then he: "If thou thy ruling star pursue,
Thou shalt not fail a glorious port to win,
Else was my guess in life's fair scene untrue;
And if my death had not so early been,
I, seeing thee so blest by heavenly grace,
Thy lofty labor had myself befriended:
But that ungrateful and malignant race
Who from Fiesole of yore descended

(Their flinty hearts retaining somewhat still
Of that rough mount) thy virtue shall detest;
Good reason why: the dulcet fig but ill
Can come to fruit by acrid sorbs oppressed.
Proud envious people, greedy still of gain!
Justly the old world's adage calls them blind:
Of their vile customs wash thou off the stain;
For thee great glory has thy fate designed.
So shall each party hunger after thee;
But far beyond the goat shall be the herb:
On their own selves these beasts of Fesulæ
May feed, but ne'er the nobler plant disturb,
If yet a single stem their dunghill bear,
In whom the sacred seed appears anew
Of those old Romans who yet lingered there,
When of such wickedness the nest it grew."

"Might all my wish," I answered him, "be granted,
Not yet hadst thou been banished human kind,
Since the dear image in my heart implanted,
Of thee, good father, still pervades my mind.
When in the world, thou taught'st me, hour by hour,
How man might make eternity his own;
And evermore, while life permits the power,
My gratitude shall in my song be shown.
Touching my fate, whatever you foretell
I keep recorded with another speech,
For a blest maid, who will conceive and well

Explain its meaning, if her side I reach.
Only to you be this resolve declared
(So from my conscience be no blame incurred):
Whatever fortune wills, I stand prepared;
Mine ears ere now have such forewarnings heard.
Whirl fortune, then, her wheel as likes her best,
And let the husbandman his mattock ply."
My Master, as my thought I thus expressed,
Turned to his right, and fixed on me his eye:
"He listeneth well who heedeth what he hears."
Thus Virgil: I, continuing to confer
With Ser Brunetto, asked, of his compeers
Who the most noted and important were.

"To know of some," he answered, "it is well;
But silence best the others will beseem;
Time were not long enough of each to tell.
Yet know that all were clerks of great esteem,
Great scholars all, of whom fame loudly talks;
And all on earth one filthy sin defiled.
There with his hapless herd, lo! Priscian walks;
Francesco, too, is there, d' Accorso styled;
Yea, on a scab so loathsome wouldst thou look,
Him thou mightst witness, whom in sin grown rank
The Servants' Servant from the Arno took
To hide away on Bacchiglione's bank:
There he was fain his ill-used nerves to leave.
More I would speak of, but must needs refrain,

Nor farther must I walk; for I perceive
New smoke arising on the sandy plain.
Some other tribe this way their footsteps bend,
From whose companionship I must forbear.
To you, my son, my Treasure I commend,
Wherein I yet survive: 't is all my prayer."
Here, like a racer o'er Verona's plain
For the green mantle, back again he ran,
In speed resembling, as he flew amain,
The winning, rather than the losing man.

CANTO THE SIXTEENTH.

Now where I stood I heard the rumbling sound,
Like swarms of bees that round their beehives hum,
Of water falling to the other round:
When towards us I beheld three spirits come.
Running, they sped together from a band
Which passed beneath that martyrdom's rough showers,
And each one shouted: "Ho, thou stranger, stand!
Whose dress betrays that wicked land of ours."
Ah me! upon their limbs what dreadful burns,
What scars, both old and recent, shocked mine eye!
Even yet my heart the mere remembrance yearns.
And as my Teacher listened to their cry,
"Wait," whispered he, turning towards me his face;

"One should use courtesy to such as they.
But for the fearful nature of the place,
Darting this fiery tempest, I might say
This eager haste less suited them than thee."
Then, as we halted, they once more began
Their ancient wail; and coming close, all three,
With restless trot, round in a circuit ran.
As champions, oiled and naked for the fight,
Are wont to watch their hold and vantage first,
Ere in the deadly struggle they unite,
Thus each at me his visage aimed reversed.
So foot and face went still in counterwise.

"And if," said one, "our aspect, parched and brown,
And these tormenting sands, make thee despise
Us and our prayers, yet reverence our renown;
And tell us, thou whose living feet are led
Safely through Hell, who art thou? Speak thy name.
He, on whose footsteps thou perceiv'st I tread,
Of nobler lineage than thou thinkest, came.
Yes! he so naked, even of skin bereaved,
Was good Gualdrada's grandson, even such:
Great Guidoguerra, who in life achieved
Much with his sword, and with his wisdom much.
And this, who next me walks the dreadful sand,
Is one whose title in the upper air

Should welcome be: Tegghiaio Aldobrand!
And I, their bitter agonies who share,
Was Rusticucci; chiefly let the blame
Light on my savage wife for all my woe!"
Hereat, had I been sheltered from the flame,
Among them straight I would have leaped below.
My Teacher, too, I think, had suffered this;
But dread of scorching in that fiery place
Conquered my wish, and forced me to dismiss
My greedy thirst to give them one embrace.

Then I began: "Soon as my Seignior here,
Uttered those words from which I rightly guessed
That such a race as you were drawing near,
Grief at your fate, not scorn, my soul possessed;
And for long years that sorrow shall not perish.
I am your countryman, and evermore
Have loved your venerable names to cherish,
And with affection conned your actions o'er.
Leaving the gall, I seek the pleasant fruit
Promised to me by this my truthful Guide;
But to the centre first must sink my foot."
"So may thy spirit lead thy limbs!" he cried,
"So shine thy fame, too, after thee! as thou
Shalt answer this: Within our city's wall
Dwells courtesy as once, and valor now?
Or are those virtues cast aside by all?
For William Borsiere, he who herds

(A recent comer here) in yonder crowd,
Torments us greatly with his bitter words."
Hereat I raised my face, and cried aloud:
"O upstart race! the sudden growth of gain
Hath bred such inequality in thee,
Such pride, O Florence! well mayst thou complain."
Receiving which for answer, all the three
Looked at each other with such conscious eyes
As men who hear truth told, then answered thus:
"O happy thou, might always thy replies
Cost thee no more than this free speech to us!
And shouldst thou ever from this dismal air
Return to view the lovely stars again,
When thou shalt say with pleasure, 'I was there,'
Recall our names, and speak of us to men."
The circle then immediately was broken;
Their nimble legs seemed wings, so swift they darted:
The word *Amen* could scarcely have been spoken
So quick as from my vision they departed.

My Master now thought best to journey on:
I followed; and the murmur grew so near
Of the cascade that, ere we far had gone,
Even our own voices we could hardly hear.
Like to that rill, in channel of its own,
The first from Monte Veso, flowing east,

Down the left coast of Apennine, and known
Above as Acquacheta; till increased,
The waters bed themselves in level shores,
And by Forlì that name no longer keep,
As there above Saint Benedict it roars,
Bounding, at one fall, down an Alpine steep,
Where for a thousand might have been supply;
Thus down a rugged precipice we found
That dingy torrent rushing from on high,
Palsying our ears with its perpetual sound.

I had a cord about my body tied,
Wherewith I formerly had thought to noose
The Leopard shining in the dappled hide,
Which thus my Guide commanded me to use:
First having freed me from this girdle quite,
I reached it, gathered in a coil, to him;
Then he, a little veering towards the right,
Cast it a certain distance from the brim
Of the rough rock, adown the steep abyss.
Some wonder now, methought, will soon reply
Unto a signal new and strange as this,
Which thus my Master seconds with his eye.
Ah, with what caution men should aye proceed
With those who look not merely at men's works,
But with their intellectual vision read
Each hidden thought which in the bosom lurks!
Here Virgil spake: "Full quickly from below

That which I watch for and thy fancy dreams
Will to thy wandering sight its figure show."
From uttering truth which like a falsehood seems,
The lip of man should evermore forbear,
Lest he be shamed, though innocent of wrong:
But here I must speak boldly; and I swear
To thee, O reader, by this sacred song,
So may the fame thereof for aye endure!
That such a figure swimming met my gaze,
Up through that thickest atmosphere obscure,
As might have smote the bravest with amaze.
So one who dives to set an anchor free,
Grappling with some huge rock in ocean's bed,
Or other clog that lurks beneath the sea,
Returns with feet drawn in and arms outspread.

CANTO THE SEVENTEENTH.

"BEHOLD the beast of the sharp tail, who breaks
Through arms and walls! who passeth mountains, yea,
Foul with his stench the whole creation makes!"
Thus unto me began my Guide to say,
And beckoning up the monster to the brim,
Nigh to the marble causeway's craggy close,
Straight at the sign, fraud's image foul and grim,
Both head and bosom, from the gulf arose;

All save his tail: he dragged not that ashore.
Fair as an honest man's appeared his face,
So smooth and gracious an outside he wore;
But all the rest was of the serpent race.
Two branching limbs he had, with shaggy hair
From the paws even to the armpits decked:
His breast, his back, and both flanks everywhere
With painted knots and little rings were specked.
Never with more variety of shade,
By any Tartar artisans or Turks,
Was web of cloth inwoven or o'erlaid,
Nor with more hues Arachne wove her works.
As barges oft lie drawn upon the strand,
Partly ashore and partly in the tide;
And even as in the greedy German's land,
The beaver, ambushing for prey, doth hide;
Such was that vilest brute's insidious mode,
While on the sand-waste's rocky rim he clung.
In the void chasm his wriggling tail he showed,
As up the envenomed, forkèd point he swung,
Which, as in scorpions, armed its tapering end.
And thus my Guide: "Towards yon accursèd beast
Our pathway now must for a little bend,
Where on the brink he crouches, as thou seest."

So to the right, descending from the ledge
More fairly to avoid the sand and flame,
We took ten paces on the abyss's edge,

And closer still to that dread creature came.
Now, further on that desert, I discern,
Nigh to the void, some seated on the ground;
And here my Lord: "That thou mayst fully learn
The nature and condition of this round,
Go forward there, and witness their distress;
But let thy parley with them be but short:
Till thy return, this beast I will address,
And ask for us his shoulder's strong support."
So farther still, upon the utmost bourne
Of that seventh circle, all alone I strayed,
Where sat the wretches doomed for aye to mourn:
Oh, how their eyes their agonies betrayed!
Ever by turns against the fiery sleet
And the hot sand, their swift hands they employed,
As dogs in summer ply both jaws and feet,
By flies or hornets or by fleas annoyed.

Then, as on certain forms I fixed mine eyes,
On whom the torment of that fire was flung,
I marked, although I none could recognize,
That from the neck of each a pouch was hung.
Each purse a blazon bore and special hue,
Which seemed as 't were their gloating gaze to nurse;
And, as I came among them, met my view
An azure emblem on a yellow purse:
A lion's face and bearing it displayed;

And onward still as rolled mine orb of sight,
Redder than blood another I surveyed,
Which bore a goose, than whitest curd more white.
And one, whose emblem was a teeming sow
Emblazoned azure on an argent pouch,
Cried: "In this under-pit what seekest thou?
Begone! yet first attend what I avouch:
Know thou, since life remaineth still to thee,
Vitaliano, once my neighbor nigh,
Shall sit here shortly on the left of me.
Among these Florentines, a Paduan, I;
And oftentimes they thunder in mine ear:
'Soon with his wallet and three goats displayed
May he approach, our sovereign cavalier!'"
Grimaces then with mouth and tongue he made,
Licking his nostril, as an ox is wont;
And I departed from the weary throng,
Fearful by more delaying to affront
Him who had warned me not to linger long.

I found my Leader there already planted
Fast on the flank of that detested brute;
And thus he said: "Be strong now, and undaunted!
Such are the stairs that our descent must suit.
Mount thou in front; myself will midway sit,
Lest the tail harm thee." As a mortal, shook
By the near visit of an ague's fit,
Who shudders even on the shade to look,

His nails already corpse-like with the cold,
Such I became, his dreadful words to hear;
Till shame, which makes a timid servant bold
Before his good lord's frown, rebuked my fear.

So, as he counseled me, I took my place
On those huge shoulders; and I strove to say,
"Do thou but steady me with thy embrace,"
But terror took all power of speech away.
He then, who many a time and oft before,
On great occasion, helped me at my need,
With his arm girdling me, my weight upbore,
And cried aloud: "Now, Geryon, proceed!
Make ample sweep and gradual descent;
On the new burden which thou bearest, think."
Like to a vessel from its moorage went
That monster, backing, backing, from the brink.
And when he found that he could freely wheel,
He turned about his outstretched tail to where
His breast had been, moving it like an eel,
And with his great paws gathered in the air.

I doubt if Phaethon more wild became
With terror, when he let the bridle go,
And Heaven's vault, kindling, caught the sudden flame
Whereof the skies even yet some token show;
Or hapless Icarus, when first he felt

(The whilst his father cried, "*Thou steer'st amiss!*")
The wax beginning from his wings to melt,
Than I, thus launched upon the void abyss.
Naught but the beast was possible to view:
He slowly, slowly wound in many a curve;
Though only from a wind, which upward blew
Against my face, his course I could observe.
Down on the right, I heard the whirlpool seethe,
Where splashing fell the horrible cascade;
And, straining forth my neck to gaze beneath,
At the dread plunge I grew still more afraid.
Such groans I heard, and saw such glare of fires,
Thereat I shrunk, all quivering with affright,
And marked his manner of descent, in spires,
Which until now the darkness kept from sight.

Now, on each side, new horrors I survey;
And like a hawk that scouring long the skies
Without discovering either lure or prey,
Till, "*Ha, thou 'rt faltering!*" the vexed falconer cries;
As tired he sinks to where he started light,
And in a hundred whirls careering round,
Perches disdainfully, and full of spite,
Far from his lord, at last upon the ground;
So Geryon, stooping, set us on our feet
Down at the base of that rude cliff abhorred;

And straight, disburthened, bounded off as fleet
As ever any arrow from a cord.

CANTO THE EIGHTEENTH.

HELL hath a region Malebolge called,
All rock and iron-colored, like the steep
Wherewith around the wicked fold is walled;
A well yawns through its centre, wide and deep.
In its due order I shall speak of this;
But for that girdle which remains between
The precipice's foot and the abyss,
To part the space ten trenches intervene.
As where some castle to defend from storm,
Moats after moats beyond the walls appear,
Giving the land there its peculiar form,
Such was the fashion of these hell-pits here.
And in such fortresses as bridges cross
From the tower's threshold to the farther bank,
So, from the cliff's base, rocks arched every fosse,
From brink to brink, till in the well they sank.
The great chasm cuts and gathers all at last:
And in this realm, when Geryon from his back
Had shaken us, the Poet straightway passed
To the left hand, I following still his track.

Now, on my right, new miseries pained my view;
Another kind of scourgers was employed,
And the first trench was filled with torments new.
Two ranks of naked sinners paced the void:
Towards us advancing came the nearer band;
The farther strode more rapidly along,
The way we went: the Romans thus have planned
To regulate the passage of the throng
When, on the year of jubilee, each train,
By reason of such numbers, keeps one side:
One towards the castle and Saint Peter's fane
Pouring, the other towards the mount doth glide.
All o'er the dun rock scattered I could see
Demons with horns; each plied a mighty whip,
Lashing them sorely on their backs: ah me,
How the first sting made those poor sinners skip!
None stayed a second nor a third, but fled.
And still proceeding, lo! amid the swarm
One I observed of whom I quickly said:
"Mine eyes ere now have feasted on that form!"
And fixed my gaze his features to retrace,
While my dear Leader lingered at my side;
Nay, suffered me to wander back a pace
Towards the flayed wretch that vainly sought to hide.
Vainly he hung his head, for I exclaimed:
"Thou art Venètico, although thine eyes
Avoid my look; Caccianimico named!

Unless that face thy actual self belies.
But what has brought thee to this bitter cup?"
"To tell," he answered, "I am ill inclined,
But must; for thy clear accent conjures up
The dear old world's remembrance to my mind.
'T was I the beauteous Isola betrayed
To the vile Marquis, his desire to please,
However else that shameful tale be said;
Nor weep I here the only Bolognese:
So swarms this crowded region with our ranks
That fewer living tongues say '*sipa*' now
Betwixt Savena's and the Reno's banks.
Wouldst be assured thereof, remember thou
How deeply avarice in our nature grows."
While thus he spake a demon drove him on
With his fell whip, crying, betwixt the blows:
"Pander! No women to let here: begone!"

I left the wretch, and now rejoined my Guide:
Only a few steps brought us where extended
One of those rocks that jut from the bank-side,
Which we full nimbly to the right ascended.
Up o'er the crag continuing thus our march,
We left those everlasting rounds of woe,
And reached the summit where it forms an arch
For the scourged multitude to pass below.
"Stop," said my Leader: "let this other crew
Of ill-starred miscreants thy full vision strike,

Whose faces have not fairly met thy view,
Seeing our course and theirs were both alike."

From the old bridge the sinners we beheld
Toward us advancing now, that adverse band,
In the same manner by the lash compelled;
And thus my Lord, ere I could make demand:
"Observe yon mighty one that, 'mid the train,
For all his misery seems no tear to shed:
How much his features yet the king retain!
'T is Jason, basely both with heart and head
Who robbed the Colchians of their fleece of gold:
Fast by the Lemnian isle he set his sails,
When the fierce women, pitiless and bold,
Had slain by savage compact all their males.
There with love-gifts and passion well profest
Hypsipyle, young virgin, he beguiled,
Who had herself deluded all the rest;
Then full of grief he left her, and with child.
Such condemnation for such crime is meet!
Here too Medea's wrong he must atone:
With him go all who practice like deceit.
Enough of this first valley now is known,
Enough of those whom that fierce torment rends."

Now came we where our pathway's narrow ridge
Across the second boundary's rim extends
Which serves as buttress to another bridge.

Thence heard we people in the trench beneath
Who, sadly moaning, slap themselves full sore,
And through their mouths and nostrils choke[illegible]y
breathe.
With a foul mould the sides were crusted o'er;
Exhaling from below, it clung thereto,
Offering annoyance both to smell and sight:
So deep the den its bottom none might view,
Save from the rocky bridge's topmost height.
Hither we came, and in the pit below
I saw a multitude in ordure drowned
Which seemed from human reservoirs to flow;
And, as with searching eye I peered around,
One with a head so loaded I descried
'T were hard to say if priest or layman he.
"Wherefore so much more greedily," he cried,
"Than these my brother brutes regard'st thou
me?"
"Because," I said, "unless my memory stray,
I 've seen thee with dry locks more neatly drest:
Thou 'rt a Lucchese, Alessio Interminei!
Therefore I mark thee more than all the rest."

He mumbled, thumping on his pumpkin pate:
"Flattery, whereof my tongue had ne'er its fill,
Thus low hath sunk me to this loathsome fate."
Hereat my Guide: "Gaze farther onward still,
A little farther; till thy vision meet

Yonder loose harlot, squalid and obscene,
Who croucheth now, now riseth on her feet,
And often tears herself with nails unclean.
'Tis the lewd Thaïs who made answer thus,
When her swain asked her if her thanks were great:
'Oh yes! my gratitude is marvelous!'
And here be this enough our gaze to sate."

CANTO THE NINETEENTH.

O Simon Magus! O ye wretches led
By him, who still the gifts of Heaven's great Sire,
Which should alone with holiness be wed,
Make prostitute for gold and silver hire,
Now must the trumpet sound for you! whose doom
Is this third pit. Ascending now again,
We came above the next succeeding tomb
Where the crag spans the middle of the den.
Wisdom supreme, what wondrous art in Heaven,
On earth, and in the wicked world is shown!
What just allotment has thy goodness given!
I saw the surface of the livid stone
O'er side and bottom pierced with many a hole
Of equal size, and every hole was round;
Such as about the great baptismal bowl
Are in my beautiful Saint John's Church found

(No less nor larger they appeared to me);
One of which holes, not many years ago,
I brake to set a stifled creature free:
Let all the truth by this avowal know.

Forth from each mouth a sinner's quivering feet
And legs protruded, far as to the calf,
Both soles afire! burning with fiercest heat.
Buried within remained the other half.
Such fearful spasms the ankle-joints o'ercame,
The force had sundered withes and ropes to shreds:
As when anointed things are burnt, the flame
Swims o'er the surface first and flickering spreads,
Even such this blaze appeared, from toe to heel.
"Master," I asked, "what wretch is writhing there,
With greater anguish than his comrades feel,
Sucked by that flame of a more sanguine glare?"
He answered: "I will bear thee, if thou wilt,
Down there, by yon more gradual decline,
So shalt thou learn from him his name and guilt."
And I to him: "Thy pleasure still is mine;
Thou art my Lord, thou know'st my silent thought,
And knowest from thy will I never stray."
Me then he straight on that fourth causeway brought,
And leftward turning, we pursued our way
Down to the pent and perforated space;
Nor did he from his hip set down my load

Till he had borne me to the open place
Through which that sinner's limbs his anguish
showed.

"Whoe'er thou art, O spirit full of woe!
That in this rock, thus planted like a stake,
Art doomed to hold thine upper part below,
If thou canst utter aught, some answer make."
I stood confessor-like (in act to shrive
Some vile assassin who, his feet in air,
Calls back the friar, to linger still alive);
And he cried out: "Ha, Boniface! art there?
Thou, standing there! already come to fate?
The writing then by several years hath lied:
So soon thy soul could that possession sate
For which thou didst beguile the beauteous bride
Thenceforth by thee so cruelly abused?"
Here I became like those who vainly seek
To comprehend some answer, all confused
As if bemocked, unknowing what to speak.

Then Virgil thus: "Reply without delay,
'I am not he, not he thou hast believed.'"
Therefore I answered as he bade me say,
The spirit writhing both his feet as grieved.
Sighing, he asked, in accents moaning low:
"Desir'st thou aught of me? What wouldst thou,
then?

Know, if it so concern thy soul to know
That thou hast ventured to explore this den,
I the great mantle wore, and was indeed
A true Orsini, whelp of that she-bear
Whose cubs I strove to advance, with such good speed
That I 'm bagged here as I bagged money there.
Headlong beneath my head are buried more,
Crammed in this rock's inexorable chink,
Who practiced simony like me before:
So I, in my turn, farther down shall sink;
Ay, soon as he approacheth whom my tongue
Hastily greeted, as I thought, in thee;
But I reversed, with burning soles, have hung
Longer than he, with his, shall planted be.
For after him shall follow, from the west,
A lawless pastor, uglier far of deed,
By whom we both shall farther down be pressed:
One of whose like in Maccabees we read;
Another Jason, whom his king of old
Favored as this one he whom France obeys."
I know not here but I was over-bold
That thus I ventured my reply to phrase:
" What sum now, tell me, did Our Lord demand,
In the first instance, and how large a fee,
His keys consigning to Saint Peter's hand?
Surely he asked no more but 'Follow me'!
Nor gold nor silver Peter and the rest

Asked of Matthias, when the lot he drew
For that high place which Judas had possessed;
Therefore remain! thy doom is justly due:
Take thou good care of that ill-gotten gain
Which boldened thee to join 'gainst Charles in strife.
And did not reverence my tongue restrain
For the high charge thou held'st in joyous life
(Those mighty keys which were of yore thine own),
I could have spoke in terms more bitter still:
Thine avarice makes the universe to groan,
Trampling down good men, and exalting ill.
The Evangelist, ye priests! had sight of you,
When she that, born with seven heads, commits
Whoredom with kings was present to his view
(The one that over many waters sits);
She that in sign of power ten horns displayed,
While yet her spouse the ways of virtue sought:
Your God of gold and silver ye have made!
Differs the idolater from you in aught
Save that he worships one, and hundreds ye?
Ah, Constantine! to how much ill gave birth
Not thy conversion, but that dower by thee
Given the first Pope whose treasure was of earth!"

And while I sang to him in such a strain,
Whether it were by conscience stung or rage,
Both of his blazing soles he writhed amain;

Which I believe well pleased my guiding Sage,
Since ever with so satisfied a look
He listened to the truths my words expressed.
My body then with both his arms he took;
And when he had me wholly on his breast,
Remounted by the way he held before,
Nor slacked his grasp as wearied with his charge,
But to the archway's top my burden bore
Which joins the fourth to the succeeding marge.
Here gently down my Master set his load;
Gently, for steep and rugged was the height,
Which very goats had found no easy road:
Thence a new trench lay open to my sight.

CANTO THE TWENTIETH.

Now of new punishment I have to sing,
And more material for the twentieth strain
Of this first portion of my poem bring,
The part which treats of people sunk in pain.
I stood already gazing, eager-eyed,
Down the disclosed abyss, which overflowed
With woeful tears, and there a race descried
Who towards us through the trenchèd circuit strode.
Silent and weeping, with the solemn gait
Of men who chant the litanies, they came;

And, as mine eye more closely scanned their state,
Strangely reversed appeared each sinner's frame.
Twisted where neck doth chin and chest unite,
High o'er their loins their visages they held;
Having before them thus no power of sight,
To walk with backward step they were compelled.
Perhaps, ere now, by palsy's powerful touch,
Some wretch there may have been so wrenched
about,
But, for myself, I never witnessed such;
And if one ever were, I greatly doubt.
Think, reader, now (God only grant thou reap
Good from thy reading!), how could I so near
Behold our form distorted thus, and keep
These cheeks of mine unmoistened with a tear?
For down the channel of their backs there crept
Rivers of tears; so that I leaned beside
One of the splinters of the rock, and wept;
For which reproved me thus my kindly Guide:

"Art thou, too, like the rest, bereft of sense?
Here piety most lives when pity dies.
What guilt can greater be than his offense
Who views God's justice with compassion's eyes?
Lift, lift thine head! at him look yonder now
For whom earth opened in the Thebans' sight,
While all exclaimed: 'Ha! whither rushest thou,
Amphiaràus? why forsake the fight?'

Meanwhile he fell, in hopeless ruin, far
As Minos, monarch of the all-seizing clutch:
See how his bosom now his shoulders are!
Once he would fain have forward seen too much,
Therefore he backward walks, with eyes behind.
Behold Tiresias next, the seer who took
A female shape, yea, wholly changed his kind,
Wearing a woman's limbs, a woman's look;
And his male plumage ere he could restore
Needs must he use again his magic rod
And strike therewith those coupling snakes once more.
Aruns comes after, doomed like him to plod.

"'Mid the white marbles up in Luni's hills,
Whose sides the peasant, nestling at their base
Down in the village of Carrara, tills,
He had a cavern for his dwelling-place:
Thence he could gaze, with naught his eye to check
From gazing on the stars and on the sea.
But look at her whose dangling tresses deck
Her breast that is not visible to thee:
Behold how all her hair before her grows!
Manto she was, who searched through many a clime
Till in my birthplace she obtained repose;
Wherefore, I pray thee, listen for a time.

After the maiden's royal father died,
When Bacchus' town a tyrant's thrall became,
Long through the world she wandered far and wide.
Up in fair Italy a lake, by name
Benacus, lies, beneath those Alps which, o'er
The Tyrol soaring, Germany impale:
A thousand fountains, I believe, and more,
Bathe Apennine 'twixt Garda and the vale
Camoniea, then slumber in that lake:
Hard by, Trent's bishop and Verona's might,
With Brescia's too, if they that way should take,
Their benediction give with equal right.
Where wider space the sloping shore permits,
The Bergamese and Brescians to confront,
A strong and sightly hold, Peschiera sits:
Here swoln Benacus to o'erflow is wont,
And forms a stream whereby the meads are crossed;
But when the waves a headlong river grow
Their name Benacus is in Mincius lost,
Fair as Governo, where it falls in Po.
Soon in its course the current finds a bed,
Spreading o'er which it settles to a marsh,
Whence oft in summer pestilence is bred.
Hither she came, this virgin sad and harsh;
And finding in the middle of the fen
A vacant waste all desolate and bare,

Yearning to shun all intercourse with men,
She stopped and fixed her habitation there.
Here with her slaves she plied her wicked arts,
But left her body tenantless at length:
Then people, scattered round the neighboring pa
Gathered thereto as to a place of strength
(Being on all sides by the marsh protected),
And over her dead bones a city walled,
The which, from her who first the spot selected,
Without more augury, they Mantua called.
Ere Casalodi's foolishness had been
By Pinamonte's artifice deceived,
Its walls a greater multitude shut in.
I charge thee be this true account believed,
Whatever false narration thou mayst hear,
Of my land's origin." I thus replied:
"Master, my faith in thee is so sincere,
In thy relation I must needs confide;
All other tales dead embers are to me:
But tell me now, of those that onward go,
Any of notice worthy dost thou see?
For that alone my mind is bent to know."

"He," Virgil answered, "from whose cheek t
trails
A beard o'er shoulders of a dusky hue,
Was once, when Greece was so bereft of males
That even the cradles hardly held a few,

The soothsayer Eurypylus, the same,
In Aulis, who with Calchas gave the sign
For the first cable to be cut. His fame
Lives in that lofty tragic verse of mine:
Thou well know'st where, who knowest all my strain.
That other yonder, round the loins so small,
Was Michael Scott, who truly could explain
The magic art with its impostures all.
See Guy Bonatti! on Asdente look!
Repenting now sincerely, but too late,
That e'er his thread and leather he forsook
To meddle with the mysteries of fate.
Behold those wretched women that resigned
Spindle and shuttle for more dangerous arms;
Who threw aside their needles, and divined,
With herbs and images contriving charms.

"But come! already close to the confines
Of either hemisphere, the wanderer Cain
Comes with his thorn-bush, and his orb declines
Low under Seville, dipping in the main.
The moon thou know'st was rounded yesternight:
Thou shouldst remember well how oft she shone,
Through the deep wood, to aid thee with her light.
Thus he to me: meanwhile we traveled on.

CANTO THE TWENTY-FIRST.

WITH other talk pursuing thus our march,
But what, my comedy cares not to say,
We reached the top of the succeeding arch,
And paused, another fissure to survey.
More vain laments here Malebolge breathes;
And dark it looked, yea, wondrously obscure.
Like sticky pitch, that during winter seethes
In the Venetians' arsenal, to cure
Their wounded ships (for, since the time prevents
Their navigation, in that leisure one
Rebuilds his bark, another calks the rents
In some old hull that many a course hath run;
O'er bow, o'er stern, the busy hammerers bend;
Some fashion oars, and some huge cables twine,
And some the mizzen, some the mainsail mend),
So, not by force of fire, but art divine,
Down underneath, a thick tar boiled and swelled,
Wherewith on either side the bank was smeared.
I saw the liquid, but therein beheld
Naught but the bubbles which the boiling reared;
I saw it heave, and then, comprest, subside:
And while I gazed intently as I could
Down in the den, "Beware!" my Leader cried,
And drew me toward himself from where I stood.

I turned, like one who lingers to behold
Something that, seen, might well persuade his flight,
Yet, as his blood with sudden fear grows cold,
Checks not his speed to satisfy his sight;
And saw a fiend, not far behind our back,
Rushing up towards us o'er the rocky road.
How fell his aspect was! how fierce and black!
And oh, what cruelty his gesture showed!
Swiftly, with outspread wings, he skimmed his way;
Across his high and peakèd shoulder cast,
A sinner's carcass on both haunches lay,
The fiend the ankle-sinew griping fast.
"Ye of our bridge," he cried, "curst-claws! I bear
One of Saint Zita's elders in my clutch:
Plunge him down deep, and back I will repair
To fetch you more. His land breeds plenty such:
There, save Bonturo, every man 's a cheat;
There *yes* of *no* for money they can make."
Hurling him down, back o'er the hard rock, fleet
He sped like a mastiff set some thief to take.
The sinner plunged, then, doubled up, arose,
While underneath the bridge more demons cried:
"No sacred visage Malebolge knows!
Far different swimming this from Serchio's tide!
Unless by our fell forks thou wouldst be maimed,
Look lest thou get above the pitch by chance."
More than a hundred prongs at him they aimed,

Crying: "Here under cover thou must dance!
So, if thou 'rt able, do thy filching hid!"
And struck him down as cunningly as cooks,
Lest the meat rise above the cauldron, bid
Their scullions keep it under with their hooks.

Then my good Master: "Lest it should be seen
That thou art here, conceal thee and crouch down
Behind this rock, and let it be thy screen.
Whate'er they threat me, fear thou not their
frown:
Well I foreknow their conduct and th' event,
Having before endured as fierce a brunt."
Then down the bridge to the sixth bank he went,
Where needed he to wear a fearless front.
With equal fury and such storm of wrath
As when dogs fly some loiterer to attack,
Who stops and cries for alms upon his path,
Rushed from beneath the bridge the spiteful pack,
And against him their weapons pointed all;
But Virgil cried: "Let none his rage display.
Ere on my form you let your flesh-hooks fall,
Come forward one, and hear what I would say.
Let him consider then of striking me."
The fiends all shouted: "Malacoda, go!"
Whereat one moved; the rest remaining, he
Came growling on: "What brings thee here
below?"

"Believ'st thou, Malacoda, thou hadst here,"
My Master said, "seen me, despite your hate,
Walk from all harm secure and void of fear,
Without the will divine and favoring fate?
Through this wild way this mortal's feet to guide
Heaven grants me power: dare not my course to stop!"
Straight at these words so fell the demon's pride
Down at his feet he let his hell-fork drop;
"We must not strike him," saying to the rest.
My Leader then: "O thou who cowerest there
Amid the splinters of the bridge comprest,
Hither to me securely now repair!"
So scrambling forth, I sped me to his side,
Yet as the devils their advance renewed
Shuddered lest by their truce they might not bide.
So shook the infantry that once I viewed,
When they by compact from Caprona came,
To see themselves hemmed round so by their foes;
And clinging to my Guide with all my frame,
I gazed, and could not move my gaze from those.
No trait of goodness tempered their bad looks.
"Wouldst thou," growled one, "I hit him on the hip?"
The others answered, aiming down their hooks:
"Ay, fork him, fellow! let him feel it nip."
But he, the fiend that with my Leader spake,
Cried, turning quick: "Stay, Scarmiglione, stay!"

Then unto us: "No farther can you take
In this direction o'er these crags your way:
All ruined lies the sixth arch to the base.
If 't is your object onward to proceed
Along this margent, ye must keep your pace;
Hard by, another rock will serve your need.
For know that yesterday, five hours more late
Than this self hour, twelve hundred rolling years
Threescore and six, fulfilled the course of fate,
Since here the way was shattered as appears.

"Thither I send this brigade of my crew
To mark if any peer above the scum:
Go with them; harmless they shall be to you."
Then he began: "Come, Alichino, come!
Come, Calcabrina, and Cagnazzo, thou!
And Barbariccia! thou the ten shalt lead!
Now, Libicocco, Draghinazzo, now!
Fanged Ciriatto! Graffiacane, speed!
Mad Rubicante, Farfarello, march!
And round about the boiling pitch explore:
These give safe conduct far as that next arch,
Which, all entire, the caverns crosseth o'er."

"O Master mine!" said I, "what is 't I see?
Alone let us without an escort go:
I ask none, if the way be known to thee.
Look at yon grinning fiends! what tusks they show!

Markest thou not, if prudence rule thee still,
With what a menace those fell brows are bent?"
"Fear not," he answered: "let them snarl at will;
'T is for their seething victims only meant."
By the left bank the fiendish cohort veered;
But each his tongue first pressed his teeth between,
And with this signal at their leader leered,
Who blew a bugle-note of sound obscene.

CANTO THE TWENTY-SECOND.

I HAVE, ere now, seen cavalry shift camp,
Begin the assault, and muster in array;
And sometimes in retreat with rapid tramp;
Light horsemen o'er your fields have I seen play,
Ye Aretines! and squadrons as they passed,
The clash of tournaments and tilting knights,
Sometimes with drums and oft with trumpet blast,
And bells and signals given from castle heights,
With foreign instruments, and with our own;
But horse or foot I never saw before
Moving to music of so strange a tone,
Nor ship, by any sign of star or shore.

With those ten fiends we went. Ah, troop of sin!
Fearful companionship! but ever so
With saints at church, with gourmands at an inn.

Yet I gazed only at the pitch below;
Bent all the contents of that den to view,
And who those might be scalding there inside:
And like as dolphins warn a watchful crew
Means for their vessel's safety to provide,
By their arched backs that coming storms fo
bode,
So to relieve the torture's keen extreme,
At times his back a quivering sinner showed,
Then vanished quicker than the lightning's glea
And just as frogs that stand, with noses out
On a pool's margin, but beneath it hide
Their feet and all their bodies but the snout,
So stood the sinners there on every side.
But soon as Barbariccia drew more near,
Under the bubbles ducked they down full swift.
I witnessed then what thrills me yet with fear:
One, lingering longer, with his head uplift,
As one frog stays, while darts the next away,
Whom Graffiacane, being nearest, hooked
Forth by the tarry locks, a writhing prey;
Like a speared otter to my sight he looked!

I knew each demon's appellation now,
For when selected, I had marked them well,
And when one hailed his mate, I noticed how.
Then thus I heard them all together yell:
"O Rubicante! fix those claws of thine

So in his back that thou his carcase flay!"
Then I: "If thou art able, Master mine,
Inform thyself concerning him, I pray:
Who is the luckless wretch that thus hath chanced
The clutch of such keen enemies to bide?"
Close to his side my Leader then advanced,
Saying: "Whence camest thou?" And he replied:

"Navarre's proud kingdom was my native place:
My mother put me in a lord's employ,
For she had borne me to a spendthrift base,
Bent both himself and substance to destroy.
The good king Tybalt next I served, and here
To peculation all my thoughts I turned,
For which I render an account so dear,
In this hot punishment where I am burned."
Then Ciriatto, from whose chaps there gleamed
A boarish tusk on either side his jaws,
With one of them the miscreant's maw unseamed.
The mouse had fallen into cruel paws!
But Barbariccia with a fell embrace
Grasped him, and shouted: "Stand aside: let me
Grapple him first." Therewith he turned his face
Towards my Lord, saying: "If your will it be
To learn more of him, quickly make request,
Before some other fiend the caitiff tear."

My Leader then: "Say if amid the rest,
Under the pitch, a Latian soul be there?"

The shade replied: "I left not long ago
One that of Latium was a neighbor near;
Ah, were I with him covered deep below!
Nor talons there nor hell-hook should I fear."
Then Libicocco: "We 've endured too long;"
And in the sinner's arm his weapon stuck,
Bringing away a sinew on his prong.
His legs, too, Draghinazzo would have struck,
But sternly round their fierce decurion glared;
And when their fury was a little stayed,
My Guide, without delay, of him who stared
On his gashed limb, this further question made:
"Whom didst thou leave (through such ill-timed desire
To come ashore) below there as thou say'st?"
"That vessel full of all deceit, the friar
Gomita," he replied, "Gallura's pest.
Having his master's enemies in charge,
He served them so that each commends his love;
For bribes, he owns, he let them go at large;
And in his other offices above
No petty barterer he, but prince in guile;
Don Michael Zanche, lord of Logodore,
Talks with him still about Sardinia's isle,
Of that loved theme unwearied evermore.

Oh me! look, look! with what ferocious air
That other demon grins: more I would say,
Did I not dread lest yonder fiend prepare
With his curst hook my tettered hide to flay!"

Here their great general, while with eyes askant
Fierce Farfarello seemed about to smite,
Turned round and cried: "Malignant kite,
avaunt!"
The wretch resumed, still quivering with affright:
"If ye would see or hear among this pack
Tuscans or Lombards, I will summon such;
Let these curst-claws but stand a little back,
So that they need not fear their vengeful clutch,
I, sitting down here in this place with you,
Will for myself make seven appear instead,
Soon as I whistle; as we use to do
Whene'er a ghost may safely raise his head."
At this Cagnazzo, wagging to and fro
His pate, and curling up his nostril, cried:
"Hear his malicious craft, to plunge below!"
Then he, so rich in trickeries, replied:
"Yea, too malicious, seeking to obtain
More misery for my comrades in the lake."
Here Alichin no longer could refrain,
But raised his voice against the rest and spake:
"If thou plunge in, I'll not give chase afoot,
But o'er the pitch my pinions I will beat;

Come, be this bank's high screen between us put!
See if thou singly may with us compete."

A novel sport, now, reader, shalt thou hear:
Soon as each fiend from that shore turned his look,
He first of all who most had seemed austere,
The Navarrese that lucky moment took,
Set his feet firmly on the ground, and sprung
Freed, in a moment, from their plotted toil!
With sudden fury every devil was stung;
But chief the fiend that caused them such a foil.
He sped amain, crying: "Thou 'rt caught!" but slow
His pinions proved, and little they availed
To match the fear of him who dived below;
And back again with soaring breast he sailed.
Even thus, whene'er a falcon hovereth nigh,
Drops the duck suddenly beneath the wave,
Jaded and galled his foe returns on high.
Fresh rage this trick to Calcabrina gave:
Greedy for strife, close after him he flew,
Glad that the ghost's escape had given him cause;
And when the barterer vanished from his view,
Straight in his fellow-fiend he fixed his claws.
High o'er the fosse he grappled with him fast;
But in return the other clawed him well,
Proving himself a powerful hawk. At last
Amid the boiling pitch they struggling fell.

The heat soon parted them : involved they sank,
And their clogged pinions vainly strove to soar ;
But Barbariccia from the other bank
Moaned with his mates, and sent to aid them four.
Swiftly they sped with all their hooks, and thrust
Their prongs to rescue the entangled pair,
Already baked within that covering crust;
And in this fray we left them struggling there.

CANTO THE TWENTY-THIRD.

SILENT we walked, in solitary mode,
My Master foremost, and myself behind,
As go the gray Franciscans on their road ;
While the late quarrel occupied my mind,
And to my memory that old fable came
Touching the frog and mouse which Æsop wrote :
Not *ay* and *yea* more signify the same
Than these two stories, if with careful note
One mark the occasion and the end of both.
And since one thought is from another bred,
So from that first a second had its growth,
Which brought back double all my former dread,
My trembling heart this fancy flashed across :
These demons through our agency have met
Discomfiture, with mockery, too, and loss,
Such as must needs their fiendish natures fret.

If rage increase that evil will of theirs,
They will pursue us fiercer in their spite
Than the fell hound the leveret which he tears:
I felt each hair with horror stand upright.
"Master," I said, intently gazing back,
"Unless thou quickly hide thyself and me,
I fear from these curst-claws a fresh attack;
Already close behind us they must be;
Yea, I imagine I can feel their hooks."
And he replied: "Were I of leaded glass,
I could not sooner catch thine outward looks
Than into mine thy inmost soul doth pass.
Mingling with mine this instant came thy thought,—
The same in bearing and in face as mine;
So that of both one counsel I have wrought.
If now this right-hand shore so much incline
That to the pit below we may descend,
The imaginary chase we shall avoid."
Of this advice he had not made an end
Before I saw them on their pinions buoyed:
Towards us, at no great distance, fierce they flew,
As 't were to strike us with their taking darts.
Quick to himself my Guide my person drew,
Even like a mother whom some outcry starts,
Waking, that sees the enkindled flames, and wild
Snatches her son and flies without delay,
Not even to catch (more caring for her child
Than for herself) one garment on her way;

And from the summit of the flinty bank,
Down by the pendent rock which bars one side
Of the succeeding trench, supine he sank.
Nor e'er did water through a conduit glide
With swifter flow to turn a land-mill's wheel,
When to the very paddles near impelled,
Than down that ridge my Master sped with zeal,
While on his breast my body's weight he held.
Thus bearing me as I had been his son,
Not mere companion, scarce his feet had gained
The bed below, when those we strove to shun
Reached the cliff o'er us: he unmoved remained.
For that high Providence which willed that they
O'er the fifth pit in ministry preside
Forbids them all beyond its bounds to stray.
Here now a painted people we descried:
Full slow, with jaded look and toilsome guise,
They went their round with lamentable moan,
In robes with low-hung cowls that hid their eyes,
And shaped like those the monks wear at Cologne.

Gilded outside, with dazzling ray they glared;
Within, all lead, and of a load so great
That Frederic's were of straw, with these compared:
O weary mantle! everlasting weight!
With them together, listening their complaint,
Still toward the left, around the chasm we kept;
But with the burden of their vesture faint

The weary tribe with lagging footsteps crept.
Thus to new spirits at each step we came.
I asked my Guide then: "May there not be found
Some one distinguished by his deeds or name?
In walking with them, pray thee look around."

And one who seemed the Tuscan speech to know,
Behind us called: "Your rapid pace restrain,
Ye who through this murk air so swiftly go!
From me, perchance, thy wish thou mayst obtain."
At this my Leader turned and whispered: "Hold!
Stay thy quick step and his companion be."
I stopped, and saw two shades whose visage told
How eagerly they longed to be with me.
Their load and clogged path hindered their advance;
But, having reached us, long without a word
With wondering eyes they looked at me askance;
Then, turning, thus together they conferred:
"One seems alive by motion of his throat;
And by what privilege, if they be dead,
Go they uncovered with the leaden coat?"
Then thus addressing me alone they said:
"Thou to this conclave who art newly come
Of wretched hypocrites, O Tuscan! deign
To speak with us, nor in disdain be dumb;
Say who thou art." I answered in this strain:
"In the great city on fair Arno's flow

This form I wear, and always have worn, grew.
But who are ye adown whose cheeks this woe
Distilleth, as I see, such bitter dew?
What glittering pain is that wherewith ye gleam?"
"These orange cloaks are leaden, and so great
The load thereof," one answered, "that the beam
Of the tired balance cracks beneath the weight.

"Gay friars we were: he Loderingo named,
I Catalano, from Bologna's land.
To guard her peace, your state our service claimed,
As oft some neutral doth for umpire stand;
And for our deeds, survey Gardingo round!"
"Ye friars! your wickedness" — I thus begun,
But said no more, beholding on the ground
One crucified, through whom three stakes were run.
He writhed all over, seeing me, and heaved
Beneath his beard deep sighs that spoke despair;
And Brother Catalan, who this perceived,
Said: "Yon pierced wretch on whom thou gazest there
Counseled the Pharisees to sacrifice
One man as martyr to the people's wrath;
Now, as thou seest, his naked body lies
Traverse for evermore across our path.
None pass but he must feel their pressure first.
Here a like torment his wife's father rues,

With others of that council thrice accurst,
The seed of so much evil to the Jews."

I marked how Virgil, wondering, gazed the while
On the poor wretch across the ground outspread,
In banishment eternal and so vile.
Addressing then the friar, my Master said:
"Say, if thou mayst, could our escape be made
By any passage to the right of this,
Without compelling those dark angels' aid
To come and guide us from this dread abyss?"
"Nearer," he answered, "than thou dar'st to hope,
From the great circle stretching, there is bent
O'er all these fearful pits a craggy cope;
Only o'er this the rocky arch is rent.
Its sloping ruins ye may climb that rise
High o'er the side and bottom of this glen.
My Guide stood looking down, in thoughtful wise,
And said: "The fiend has misinformed us, then,
That yonder sinners with his weapon wrings."
"I 've at Bologna heard," replied the friar,
"Much ill of Satan; amid other things,
That he 's a liar, and of lies the sire."

Straightway my Leader slowly onward strode,
His face just flushed with anger's transient heat:
I left those spirits, too, of heavy load,
Following the print of his beloved feet.

CANTO THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

In the year's infant season, when the sun
Tempers his tresses 'neath Aquarius' reign,
And towards the equinox the long nights run;
When the frost copies on the glittering plain
The pure white image of her sister snow,
Though her light writing soon is thawed away,
The peasant then, whose wintry store is low,
Starts forth and looks about him in dismay;
And, seeing everywhere the whitened ground,
Smites on his thigh, returning to his cot,
And wanders here and there, complaining round,
Poor wretch! unknowing how to mend his lot.
Then, sallying out again, his hope revives
To see how soon the world has changed its face,
And catching up his crook, his flock he drives
To their old pasture with a cheerful pace.
Even so my heart sank when I marked my Guide
Wearing such trouble writ upon his brow,
And even so soon the balsam he supplied.
For we had reached the broken causeway now,
And turning towards me with that gentle smile
Which, at the mountain's base, I thought so sweet,
Scanning the ruin, first he mused awhile;
Then oped his arms and raised me from my feet.

Like one who toiling seemeth to foresee
Ever some other labor still to do,
Thus, to one fragment's top in lifting me,
Eyed he the next and cried: "Cling fast thereto!
But try it first, if 't will thy pressure bear."
For a cloaked sinner 't were no easy pass;
Since though he bore my weight, himself but air,
Scarce could we mount from toppling mass to mass;
And had it not been that the encircling rim,
On this side of the chasm, was less in height
Than on the other, I 'll not speak for him!
But, for myself, I had been vanquished quite.
But Malebolge sinks (its form is such)
Still towards the mouth of the last pit of all;
Therefore in every valley just as much
As one side rises must the other fall.

The ruin's topmost point at length we gained,
Whence the last stone broke off that fell below:
And here my lungs were of my breath so drained
That, once arrived, I could no further go.
But as I sat, the Master cried: "Arise!
Shake off all weakness; for whoso on down,
Or underneath a coverlet who lies,
Never shall come to knowledge of renown;
And without fame who lets his life outwear,
Leaveth such vestige of himself behind
As foam in water leaves, or smoke in air:

Up, then! and conquer sloth by strength of mind.
The mind comes victor off in every fight,
Unless the body burden it too much:
Come, we have stairs to scale of loftier flight!
'T is not enough to have 'scaped the demons' clutch:
Profit by these words, if their sense thou heed."
Then up I sprang, and showed myself possessed
Of breath far better than I felt indeed,
And said: "Lead on! I 'm strong, nor wish for rest."

Now up the rock we took our way once more,
A narrow, broken, difficult ascent,
And steeper far than we had just climbed o'er.
Not to seem weak, conversing still I went;
When came a voice forth from the other fosse,
Muttering, not uttering distinctly aught:
Though on the summit of the arch across
I stood, the words it said I vainly sought,
Though he who spake seemed full of wrath and fierce.
I bent me to gaze down, but living sight
That darkness could not to the bottom pierce:
I begged my Lord then to descend the height
To the next bank, that formed the archway's pier.
"Yea, let us clamber down the wall," said I,
"For as I hear, unknowing what I hear,
So I see down, but nothing can descry."

"Fulfillment is the sole reply, my son,
I render thee: a frank request," he said,
"Should be received in silence, and be done."
So we descended by the bridge's head,
Where with the eighth bank it unites; and here
Opened upon mine eyes the loathsome deep
Within whose gloom I saw a sight of fear:
Serpents of strangest kind, a horrid heap!
Remembrance in my blood a shuddering wakes.
Let Libya 'mid her sands her poisonous host,
Chelydras, amphisbænas, javelin-snakes,
Chersydras, cenchris, phareas, no more boast:
Pests of such sort, so many and so fell,
That country never yet produced! with all
That in the wilds of Ethiopia dwell,
Or o'er the deserts by the Red Sea crawl.

Amid this foul and savage swarm, a race
Ran trembling naked, without hope to find
Heliotrope's charm, or any hiding-place:
Their hands with serpents fast were bound behind:
These both with head and tail their loins pierced through,
Being in front close gathered in a knot.
And lo! at one, beside our bank, there flew
A reptile which transfixed him on the spot,
Striking him just where neck and shoulders blend;

Instant the sinner kindled into flame:
Never was *O* nor *I* more swiftly penned
Than, sinking down, all ashes he became!
And soon as thus dissolved in dust he fell,
Straightway the ashes gathered from the earth
To their old figure: thus, great sages tell,
The phœnix dies, then hath a second birth,
About the term of her five hundred years,
Through which on no green herb nor blade she feeds,
But incense only, and the amomum's tears,
While myrrh and spikenard form her funeral weeds.
As one who falls, not knowing how he falls,
Whether some demon drag him to the ground,
Or some obstruction that the man enthralls,
Soon as he riseth strangely gazes round;
And by the agony he just hath past
Bewildered, sighs and looks with wondering stare,
Thus, as that sinner rose, he stood aghast.
Justice of God! how terrible to bear,
That pourest down thy storm of vengeance so!
Who he might be, my Guide demanded then.
"I rained from Tuscany, not long ago,"
Replied the wretch, "down into this wild den.
Bestial, not human life pleased me; for I
Am Vanni Fucci, one of mulish heart,
A beast: Pistoja was my fitting sty."

Then I to Virgil: "Bid him not depart,
But ask what crime the caitiff hither brought,
Whom for a man of blood and wrath I knew."
The sinner heard, nor to evade me sought,
Though his cheeks burned with shame's distressful
hue;
But leveling at me his mind and eyes,
Gave me this answer: "More it makes me mourn
That thou my misery shouldst thus surprise,
Than from the other life when I was torn.
I cannot choose but answer thy demand.
Thus low I dwell because I dared invade
The sacristy's fair gifts with impious hand;
Which deed was to another falsely laid.
Yet to have seen me here lest thou rejoice,
When thou these pits of darkness shalt have left,
Open thine ears to my prophetic voice!
Pistoja first of Neri shall be reft;
Then, Florence changing both her men and laws,
Mars brings a lightning-flash from Magra's vale,
Which blackest clouds inwrap and furious flaws,
And shall ere long full bitterly assail,
In storm of battle, on Piceno's plain;
But soon the fog asunder he will tear,
Nor shall one Bianco without scath remain:
All which I tell thee to thy soul's despair."

CANTO THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

ENDING that speech of his, the robber threw
Both hands on high, and made the sign of shame,
Crying: "God! take it; this I mean for you."
From that time forth the snakes my friends became:
For one, as if to say, "*Blaspheme no more!*"
Entwined his neck; his arms another bound,
Then bored him through, clinching itself before,
That neither limb could stir, so tightly wound.
Ah, thou Pistoja, thou Pistoja! why
By thine own counsels is it not decreed
That thou shouldst perish and in ashes lie,
Gone in thy guilt so far beyond thy seed?
Through all the dingy circles down in hell
I saw no spirit 'gainst his God so proud:
Not from the walls of Thebes the wretch that fell!
He fled; nor farther utterance was allowed.

Then I beheld a Centaur swoln with wrath,
Come shouting: "Where's that hardened sinner, where?"
I guess Maremma fewer serpents hath,
Fewer than dangling round his flanks he bare,
To where the beast and human aspect blended;
Behind his neck and o'er his shoulders lay

A fiery dragon, with his wings extended,
Kindling to flame all shapes that cross his way.
"Lo! that is Cacus," thus my Master spake,
"Who round his dwelling, 'neath the rocky steep
Of Aventine, oft spread a bloody lake:
He walks not in the path his fellows keep.
For the vast herd that pastured near his cave
He stole by trickery; great Alcides then
Finished his frauds with mace that haply gave
A hundred strokes, though scarce felt he the ten."

During these words the Centaur galloped by;
And underneath us three new spirits came
Of whom nor Virgil was aware, nor I,
Till, "Who are ye?" we heard the band exclaim:
This cut our story short; and for a space
Gazing we stood, on them alone intent.
I knew them not; but, as is oft the case,
One called another's name by accident.
"Ha! where is Cianfa gone?" exclaimed the shade;
And that my Guide might stand attent and hark,
My finger straightway on my lip I laid,
In sign of silence. Now, O reader! mark;
And if my tale thou slowly shalt receive,
Thy doubt will cause in me no great surprise;
For I, who saw it, hardly can believe:
But as I stared on them with lifted eyes,

Swiftly at front of one a serpent darts,
With six feet clinging to his frame throughout;
His fore-feet grasped the arms; the middle parts
With his mid-feet he closely twined about.
Next with his fangs the cheeks he did assail;
His hinder-feet he stretched o'er either thigh,
Between them thrusting his insidious tail,
Which up behind the loins he swung on high.
Ivy ne'er coiled about a tree so tight
As the dread reptile his own members twined
Around his prey; like wax, before my sight,
Each melted into each with hues combined;
Neither appeared what he had been before:
So, with papyrus burning, ere it fires,
A browner color spreads the surface o'er,
Not black as yet, although the white expires.
The others gazed, and each exclaimed: "Ah me,
Agnello, how thou changest in thy frame!
Nor two nor one thou seemest now to be."
Yet now a single head the two became,
Where in one visage, which confounded two,
The twain were blended: yea, four limbs compressed
Into two arms their lengths before my view;
The legs and thighs, the belly and the chest,
Became new members, such as ne'er were seen,
Nor of the former shape appeared a trace:
And the perverted form, whose mingled mien
Seemed both, yet neither, passed with lagging pace.

As the swift lizard, 'neath the scourging ray
Of dog-star time, seems lightning, if by chance,
Flitting from hedge to hedge, it cross the way,
So did a fiery little adder glance
Straight at the bowels of the other two,
A livid snake, and black as pepper's grain.
One wretch it fastened on and stung him through,
Just there where first our nutriment is ta'en;
Then at his feet its own stretched length it cast.
The pierced thief eyed the monster, but was dumb,
And yawning stood with ankles planted fast,
As though by sleep or fever-fit o'ercome.
While on the serpent thus his gaze he bent,
Its own the reptile on the sinner fixed;
One from its mouth, one from his bleeding rent,
Steamed a strong smoke that, rising, met and mixed.

Let Lucan now his piteous tale give o'er
Of poor Sabellus, and Nasidius' fate,
And list my story: Ovid now no more
Of Arethuse and Cadmus need relate:
What though the poet, fabling as he wont,
Make her a fountain, him a snakish brute?
I envy not his art; for, front to front,
Two natures never did he so transmute
That each its form should for another's quit,
As, in obedience to one law, these two.
Into a fork the serpent's tail was split,

The wounded shade his feet together drew;
His legs and thighs so closely next combined
That of their juncture not a trace was left:
The shape of human limbs that he resigned
The snake's tail took, and into legs was cleft.
His skin grew hard, the snake had scales no more;
I saw his arms within his armpits sink:
The brute's fore-paws, that had been short before,
Lengthened, in manner even as those did shrink.
Next, the hind-feet, now close together grown,
Became that member which mankind conceals;
While cloven in twain the wretch beheld his own.
Meantime o'er both the veiling vapor steals:
This a new color gives and makes one bald,
But on the other generates a hair;
One rose upright, the other groveling crawled.
Yet kept those impious lamps their mutual stare,
Under the which each creature changed his mien;
For the face drew, in him that stood erect,
Back towards the temples, where two ears were seen
From the sleek joles' exuberance to project:
The rest thereof, which did not thus retreat,
Into the nasal prominence arose,
And swelled the lips out, as for lips was meet.
Meanwhile the prostrate thing puts forth its nose,
And even as its horns a snail draws in,
Contracts into its head those human ears;

The tongue, that whole and fit for speech had been
Is cleft, and now a serpent's fork appears;
The serpent's closeth, and the smoke subsides.
The soul that had become of reptile kind,
Speeding, with hisses, through the valley glides,
The other, sputtering human speech, behind.
Then towards the snake the latter turned his back,
Fledged with new shoulders, and addressed the one
Who stood apart: "I crave that o'er this track
Buoso may crawl, as I before have done."

Thus did I mark the shifting ballast change
In this seventh pit: and be my pen excused
For wandering somewhat on a theme so strange;
Mine eyes were wildered and my mind confused,
Yet they escaped me not. I marked full well
The limping Puccio, sole one of the three
Comrades that came first, whom no change befell;
And one, Gavilla's town, made woe for thee!

CANTO THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

Joy to thee, Florence! that so great art grown,
Thy wings thou spreadest over shore and sea,
And throughout Hell thy name is widely known.
Among these thieves five such were found by me,
Children of thine in whose disgrace I share,

And thou from them shalt no great glory gain!
But, if our morning dreams the truth declare,
Thou too, ere long, shalt suffer all the bane
That Prato prays for, not to say worse foes:
Nay, were it now, too early 't would not be.
Whatever must be, would it were! Thy woes
Will add more weight to that of years on me.

Departing hence, my Guide with toilsome tread
Up the projecting stones, which served before
As stairs for our descent, my footsteps led,
The crags and rocky splinters clambering o'er;
Pursuing thus our solitary way,
Our feet without our hands availed us naught.
It grieved me then, and grieves me still to-day,
When what I saw returns upon my thought;
And with unwonted rein I hold subdued
My genius, lest it stray from virtue's road,
And make of none effect whatever good
My star on me, or Heaven, may have bestowed.

As in that season, when with less concealed
A face he shines who floods the world with light,
When to the gnat the weary fly doth yield,
The peasant, resting on some neighbor height,
Beholds the fireflies in the vale below,
Wherein he ploughs, or trims his vines, perchance,
So many flames this eighth pit, all aglow,

Showed when its depth I fathomed with my
glance!
And as whom once the avenging bears befriended
Beheld Elijah's chariot whirled on high,
When up to Heaven the soaring steeds ascended,
And he in vain pursued them with his eye,
Since he could only see the leaping flame,
As Heavenward like a little cloud it went;
Thus through the gulf, in aspect just the same,
Glided these fires, but hid the prey they pent;
For every flame a sinner folded in.
I stood so bending o'er the bridge, to look,
That I had fallen, though pushed I had not been,
Save that such grasp of a rough crag I took.
My Guide, who marked me thus intently gaze,
Said: "In those fires the spirits are confined,
Each in his garment of consuming blaze."
"Master," I answered, "thou confirm'st my mind
Even now that thought I was about to speak;
But who is tenant, say, of yonder fire
That rises there with a divided peak,
As 't were the Theban brothers' funeral pyre?"
He answered me: "Within that martyrdom
The great Ulysses burns with Diomed:
Together thus to vengeance they have come,
As once, on earth, to wrathful deeds they sped.
And in their flame full bitterly they groan
The stratagem of that famed wooden steed,

By means whereof the gate was open thrown
Whence issued forth the noble Roman seed.
There for that craft whence, even of life bereft,
Deïdamía still bewails her lord,
Her lost Achilles; yea, and for the theft
Of Troy's Palladium, they have meet reward."

"Master," I said, "if, in that flame of theirs
That sparkleth so, they have the power of speech,
I pray, and pray thee with a thousand prayers,
That thou refuse not what I now beseech.
Wait till the hornèd flame this way shall move;
See with what eagerness I towards it bend."
"Thy prayer," he answered, "greatly I approve,
And to thy wish a large acceptance lend.
But let thy tongue from further talk refrain;
Leave me to parley, for I well divine
All thy desire: they haply might disdain,
For they were Grecians, any word of thine."
So when the flame had moved along to where
The time and place seemed fitting to my Guide,
I heard him in this form address the pair:
"Stay, O ye twain that in one fire abide!
If in my life I was deserving aught,
If much or little I deserved of you
When in the world my lofty verse I wrought,
Let one his wanderings, to his death, tell through."

The larger horn of that old flame began
To curl and quiver, and a murmur woke,
As when the wind a fluttering fire doth fan.
Then, as it were the very tongue that spoke,
Swaying its summit to and fro, it sent
This utterance forth: "When, for a year and
more,
Circe had held me near Gaëta pent,
Ere yet Æneas had so named the shore,
I 'scaped her spell; but not my gentle boy,
Nor pious reverence for mine agèd sire,
Nor the due love that should have warmed with joy
My dear Penelope, could quell the fire
Of my deep wish the world and human worth,
And human vices, too, to understand:
But on the broad, high seas I ventured forth
With one sole vessel, and that little band
Who ne'er deserted my attempt the while;
And coasted either shore as far as Spain,
Far as Morocco, past Sardinia's isle,
And all the rest bathed round there by the main.

"At last, when old and slow with life's decline,
We reached the strait where Hercules, of yore,
His boundary set, in everlasting sign
That none the ocean further should explore,
On the right hand receding Seville lay;
On the left, Ceuta sank in ocean's breast.

Then I: 'O brothers who have stemmed your way
Through many thousand perils to the west!
To this brief vigil which remains to run
Of your worn senses, grudge not, I entreat,
To add the experience, following still the sun,
Of yonder world untrod by mortal feet.
Consider, men, the seed from which ye grew!
To live like brutes ye surely were not formed,
But virtue still, and knowledge, to pursue.'
With this brief speech my comrades' minds I warmed,
Till for the voyage they so keenly yearned
To hold them back I vainly had essayed;
So to the morn our stern again was turned
For the mad flight, and wings of oars we made.
Still towards the left our constant course we steered,
Till night saw all the stars that spangle o'er
The other pole, and ours no longer reared
Its glittering host above the ocean floor.

"Five times the moon had now renewed her ray,
Five times the light had failed beneath her rim,
Since first we entered on our lofty way,
When lo! a mountain, in the distance, dim;
So high a peak before I never saw.
We joyed, but soon our joy became lament;
For from the new-found land arose a flaw,
That on our vessel's bow its fury spent.

Three times with all the waves it whirled us round;
At the fourth whirl the stern was lifted high;
Down went the prow, as best by Him was found!
And o'er our heads the ocean closed for aye."

CANTO THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

Now, for the term of its discourse was spent,
Erect and quiet rose the steadfast flame,
Then left us, with the gentle Bard's consent;
When lo! behind the first another came,
And by a mingled noise therefrom that burst
Attracted towards its top our wandering eyes.
Like the Sicilian bull that bellowed first,
As just it was, with its inventor's cries,
Whose wicked file had shaped the monstrous mass,
And by the groaning of the wretch within
Appeared, though fashioned but of senseless brass,
As though itself had pierced with anguish been;
Even thus, before the woeful words had found
Passage or vent, in struggling from their source,
The fire to its own language changed the sound,
Until they reached the summit in their course.

But to that point as soon as they had striven,
Causing the same vibration in the peak
Which, on their way, the tongue within had given,

We heard this voice: "O thou to whom I speak!
Who didst thyself, even now, use Lombard speech,
Saying, 'Depart! I trouble thee no more;'
Though haply somewhat late thine ear I reach,
To speak with me have patience, I implore.
See, I am patient, burning as I stand:
If thou art newly fallen to breathe the air
Of this blind world from Latium's pleasant land,
Whence all the burden of my sins I bear,
Tell me if now Romagna's tribes remain
At peace, or war; for I was of the hills
Betwixt Urbino and the mountain-chain
Whence Tiber first unlocks his infant rills."

Bending I stood to listen; but my Guide
Touched my side, saying: "Speak unto him thou;
He is Italian." Instant I replied
Thus, as I stood prepared to, even now:
"O hidden spirit! thy Romagna ne'er
Was free from war in her own tyrants' hearts;
Nor is it now: yet, when I came from there,
No open strife was ravaging those parts.
In her old state Ravenna still abides
(Polenta's eagle making there his nest,
So that even Cervia with his wings he hides),
And the brave town that stood so long a test,
And piled in bloody heaps the Frenchmen round,
To the Green Lion's gripe at last is won.

Verruchio's mastiffs, that Montagna found
Such cruel keepers, both the sire and son,
Still, where they wont, their fangs for augers wield
While, shifting sides, from midsummer to cold,
The Lion couched upon an argent field
Lamone's and Santerno's town doth hold.
But she whose flank is washed by Savio's flow,
Even as her site is, in the middle way
Betwixt the mountain and the plain below,
Dwells between freedom and a tyrant's sway.
Now, who thou art, I pray thee frankly own!
Be not more hard than other souls have been:
So may thy name on earth be widely known."

The flame first roared awhile its wonted din;
Then, in its fashion, as the summit played
From side to side, breathed to me this reply:
"Did I believe that my response were made
To one returning to the world on high,
This flame of mine should motionless remain;
But since none ever did his way retrace,
If truth I hear, from this abyss of pain
I give thee answer, fearing no disgrace.

"I was a soldier, then a corded friar;
So girdled, thinking meet amends to make:
And surely this had proved no vain desire,
But for the great High Priest, whom curses take!

'T was he seduced me to my sins once more.
Hear how and why; thy hearing it is worth.
While I my bones and pulpy members wore,
Which my good mother gave me at my birth,
Mine was the fox's, not the lion's part:
I knew all tricks, all covert ways of fraud,
And with such cunning carried out their art,
To the world's end my fame was noised abroad.
But when I saw that part of life begin
Where it behoveth every man to strike
His weary sails, and take his halyards in,
What most had pleased now bred in me dislike.
Therefore in penitence I bent my knees,
Confessed, woe 's me! and might have grace obtained,
But for that prince of modern Pharisees,
Who near the Lateran at war remained;
Not now with Jews nor Saracens, for all
His foes were Christians: none amid the band
Had ever been to conquer Acre's wall,
Or play the merchant in the Sultan's land.
He his high office and his holy rank
Little regarded, nor that rope of mine
Which wont to make its fasting wearers lank.
But in Soracte's cave as Constantine
Besought Sylvester's aid to set him free
From leprosy, even so to get release
From his proud fever he consulted me

As his physician; but I held my peace.
For scarcely sober seemed his words: 'From now
I do absolve thee; be no more afraid;'
He thus proceeded: 'only teach me how
May Palestrina in the dust be laid.
Of Heaven thou know'st I hold the double keys,
To lock and loose, by him too lightly prized
Who went before me.' Arguments like these
Pushed me to where some answer seemed advised.
'Father,' I said, 'the sin wherein I fall
Since thou, I know, hast power to purge away,
Be great in promise, in performance small:
So shalt thou triumph in thy seat of sway.'

"Saint Francis came my parted soul to fetch;
But one of those black-visaged cherubs cried:
'Hold off your hands! nor wrong me of the
wretch:
Down he must sink, and with my slaves abide;
Yea, for the fraudulent advice he gave,
Since which I ever at his hair have been.
No pardon an impenitent can save,
Nor can one both repent, yet wish to sin,
For contradiction will not this allow.'
Ah, wretched me! my soul what shuddering
thrilled
When, seizing me, he muttered: 'Haply thou
Didst not believe me thus in logic skilled!'

To Minos then he hurried me, who tied
His rigid back eight times with circling tail,
And biting it, in his great fury, cried:
'This guilty wretch the stealing fire must veil!'
So to perdition, as thou seest, I came,
And go with heart all rancor, clad in fire."
Here, having ended thus, the moaning flame
Went writhing, tossing up his pointed spire.

But we passed on, my Guide and I, to where
O'er the next moat another arch was built;
Herein their chastisement those wretches bear
Who, sowing discord, reaped a load of guilt.

CANTO THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

WHO, even in language unrestrained by law,
Though telling oft, could fully tell of all
The sights of blood, the ghastly wounds I saw?
Far short of truth sure every tongue must fall:
Our mind and speech could ne'er such theme command.
For should the multitude arise once more
That in Apulia's many-fortuned land
(Whose battlefields were moistened with their gore)
The Romans slew, and in that war so long

In which, as Livy the unerring writes,
Such spoil of rings was made; should all the throng
That fell by Robert Guiscard and his knights,
With all whose bones even yet in heaps are found
At Ceperàn, where each Apulian broke
His faith, and where on Tagliacozzo's ground
Old Alard won the day, without a stroke,
Come back together, and should one expose
His mangled stump, and one his limb pierced
through,
All were as nothing to the hideous woes
Which this ninth pit presented to my view!

A cooper's vessel that by chance hath been
Either of middle-piece or cant-piece reft,
Gapes not so wide as one that, from his chin,
I noticed lengthwise through his carcass cleft.
His entrails dangled down betwixt his thighs;
His liver, too, and that foul bag was seen
That changeth all it gets in loathsome wise.
And while I looked, with eager eyes and keen,
My gaze returning, with his hands he tore
His breast, and cried: "Look, how myself I rend!
See Mahomet mangled! He who goes before,
Groaning and gashed, was Ali once, my friend.

"From chin to crown he bears a cloven face;
And all the rest whom thou beholdest here

Sowed schism and scandals in their earthly race,
And therefore sundered go as they appear.
A fiend that cleaves us waits here at our back,
With his fell sword renewing still the wound
In each of this poor lacerated pack,
When we have compassed our distressful round:
The wounds are healed ere we repass his blow.
But who art thou, on yonder rock bemused,
As haply to delay the destined woe
For sins whereof thyself thou hast accused?"

"Death has not reached him yet," my Lord replied,
"Nor down to torment leadeth sin his soul;
But I, who am dead, him through Hell must guide,
From round to round, that he may know the whole:
This is as true as that I speak to thee."
At this, above an hundred of the train
Stopped in the fosse to fix their gaze on me,
Through mere amaze forgetful of their pain.

"Then tell Dolcino, thou who shortly mayst
Behold the sun, to store his camp with food
(Unless down here he after me would haste),
Lest by the stress of snows he be subdued,
And yield a triumph to Novara's race,
Which else no light-won victory might prove."
This word said Mahomet, with suspended pace,
Lifting one foot as if about to move;

To earth he pressed it then, nor longer stopped.
Meanwhile another, with his gullet cleft,
And his nose level with his eyebrows lopped,
And unto whom one only ear was left,
Stayed with the rest, his eyes with wonder wide
Staring upon me; and before the rest
Opening his throat that was all over dyed
Vermilion, unto me these words addressed:

"Thou whom no crime to punishment hath brought
And whom in Latium I have seen of old,
Unless too strong resemblance cheat my thought!
If e'er that gentle plain thou mayst behold
That from Vercelli slopes to Marcabó,
Remember Pier da Medicina there;
Ay, and let Fano's two best townsmen know.
To Angiolello and Sir Guy declare
That, if in Hell our foresight be not vain,
Hard by Cattolica they shall be flung
Forth from their vessel into Adria's main,
By a fell tyrant snared, of treacherous tongue.
Never did Neptune, 'twixt Majorca's isle
And that of Cyprus, witness wrong like this;
Never by pirates wrought so base a wile,
Not even that faithless race of Argolis.
That one-eyed traitor, he who holds in thrall
The land which one who walketh here with me
Would fain have never looked upon, shall call

These two to council, making that his plea;
Then so contrive that neither vow nor prayer
Shall they need further 'gainst Focára's wind."
"Show me," said I, "if thou wouldst have me bear
Tidings of thee above, among mankind,
Who 's he in whom that sight such grief doth cause?"
At this the sinner, seizing upon one
Of his companions, forced apart his jaws,
And cried: "Behold him! utterance he hath none.
This outcast, quelling Cæsar's doubt, declared
That ruin ever waited on delay
When every thing for action was prepared."

Oh, how poor Curio quivered with dismay,
His throat bereft of that perfidious tongue
Wherewith he dared such madness to incite!
Meanwhile one wretch, whose hands were wanting, flung
The mangled stumps up through the lurid light,
Crying, as on his face their foul drops blended:
"Give Mosca too in thy remembrance place,
Who said, alas! 'A thing once done is ended,'
Words that sowed trouble for the Tuscan race."
"And thine own tribe's destruction!" added I:
With which pang heaped on pain, he strode along
Like one to madness driven by misery.
But I remained to gaze upon the throng,

And saw what I without more proof might quail
Merely to tell, but conscience aids me here,
The good companion that, beneath the mail
Of feeling faultless, keeps men free from fear.

I truly saw, and still it haunts my view,
A headless body, moving with like tread
As moved the others of that mangled crew;
And in his hand he bare his own lopt head,
As 't were a lantern, dangling by the hair;
Swinging he held it, and it cried, "O me!"
As full on me it fixed a piteous stare.
Thus his own lamp unto himself was he,
And two in one there were, and one in two:
How that can be He knows who orders thus.
And to the bridge's foot as close he drew,
Raising his arm with all the head to us,
Nigh to our ears he brought these words: "O thou,
Who walk'st, a breathing man, through Hell's abyss
To view the dead, behold this torment now,
And see if any be so great as this!
Know that I am (so mayst thou, as I crave,
Bear tidings of me to the upper earth!)
Bertram de Born, the councilor who gave
Such ill advice to John of royal birth.
I put rebellion 'twixt the son and sire:
Achitophel with more malignant art

Did not spur Absalom to wrath, nor fire
With equal hatred kingly David's heart.
For parting those whom love did so intwine
I bear my brain, ah! severed from its source,
Which yet remaineth in this trunk of mine:
Thus retribution holds in me its course."

CANTO THE TWENTY-NINTH.

MINE eyes were so inebriate now with grief
At the vast numbers gashed in divers ways,
They longed to wait, and, weeping, find relief.
But Virgil said: "What so attracts thy gaze?
Why stand'st thou staring fixedly below
At yonder wretched mutilated ghosts?
None of the other pits detained thee so.
Consider, if thou think to count their hosts,
This valley two and twenty miles doth wind;
Even now the moon beneath our feet must be:
Our time is little that remains assigned,
And more than what thou seest remains to see."
"Hadst thou observed the cause of my delay,
When I looked down with vision so intent,
Thou mightst have still permitted me to stay:"
I made this answer, following as he went,
And added: "In that den o'er which I stood,
Watching the crowd with so intent a stare,

I do believe a spirit of my blood
Groans for the guilt which costs so dear down
there."

The Master then: "Fret not thy heart for him;
Note something else, and let that caitiff be:
At the bridge foot I marked him, stern and grim,
With threatening finger fiercely point at thee.
I overheard them call his name, and say
Geri del Bello: thou wast rapt so long
With him that erst held Hautefort in his sway,
Thou didst not heed him, and he joined his throng."
"His death by violence, my Guide," said I,
"Which to this day doth unavenged remain
By any of his kindred, shamed thereby,
Inspired him, I suppose, with such disdain
That he passed by me with a silent spite;
And all the more I pity him." With this
We reached the first point, that with stronger light
Would, to the bottom, show the next abyss.

O'er Malebolge's final cloister here
We stood, so all the brotherhood therein
Might meet our gaze: strange moanings pierced
mine ear,
As arrows steeled with pity they had been.
I put my hands upon mine ears: such wail
As would be heard if all the dying men

From the pest-houses of Chiana's vale,
And all the sick of the Maremma's fen,
And of Sardinia's isle, betwixt July
And autumn, should be tumbled in one trench
Howling together, such was here the cry,
And like the smell of festering limbs the stench.

Descending now, we reached the closing bank
Of that long rocky bridge, still to left hand:
Here with more vivid force my vision sank
Down to the bottom, and the cavern scanned.
Herein the handmaid of the Most High Lord,
Justice Infallible, requites the sin
Of every forger she doth here record.
And much I doubt if greater grief had been
To see Ægina's people all infirm,
When so malignant was the sickly air
That every creature, to the little worm,
Perished, and afterwards, as bards declare,
The ancient races were restored again
From seed of ants, than here it was to view
The spirits languishing in that dark glen,
Heaped round in scattered groups, a ghastly crew.

One o'er the shoulders of his fellow lay;
One o'er another's belly; and a third
Crawled on all fours along his dismal way:
We passed them step by step, without a word

Looking, and listening to the leprous pack,
Not one of whom could lift his feeble form.
And two I saw there, leaning back to back,
Propped like a pair of dishes put to warm.

O'er them from head to foot a scurvy spread:
Nor did I ever see a groom so ply
His currycomb, who longed to taste his bed,
Or whose impatient lord stood waiting by,
As each full oft with his remorseless nails
Clawed his own hide, so great a rage he felt
Of the fell itch for which naught else avails,
And wrenched the scabs off from his tettered pe
As a knife scrapeth from a bream the scales,
Or other fish with scales of larger make.
"O thou whose hand thy body thus unmails,"
These words to one of them my Leader spake,
"Who mak'st a forceps of thy fingers! say
If haply any Latian spirit lurk
Among the rest within there; so for aye
May thy nails last thee for this loathsome work.
"We are Italians both, whom thou seest thus
Ravaged and raw," one wept as he replied;
"But who art thou that hast inquired of us?"
Then to the wretch this answer made my Guide

"I with this living man am one that go,
From steep to steep, descending on my way,

And him this pit of Hell I mean to show."
At this they sundered from their mutual stay,
And each towards me turned trembling, with the rest
That indirectly Virgil's answer caught.
Then my good Master me alone addressed,
Saying: "Speak to them, if thou wouldst, thy thought."

"So may your memory," then I thus began,
"Flourish on earth for many suns, and ne'er
By time be stolen from out the mind of man,
As ye your name and nation shall declare:
Spite of this hideous torment let me know,
Nor dread to tell." This answer one returned:
"Arezzo was my birthplace: Albero,
He of Sienna, caused me to be burned;
But what I died for hath not brought me here.
'T is true I told him, speaking but in jest,
That I with wings my way through air could steer:
Whereat the fool, all wonder, made request
That him this art of soaring I would show;
And for no cause but that I could not make
Of him a Dædalus, he managed so
That his supposed sire sent me to the stake.
But me to this last cavern of the ten
Minos, the judge who cannot err, hath doomed,
Because I practiced alchemy with men."

Here turning to the Poet, I resumed:
"Was ever nation like Sienna's vain?
Surely the French are not so vain a tribe."

That other leper heard my taunting strain,
And then returned this answer to my gibe:
"Save Stricca, he so frugally that spent;
And saving Niccolo, who used the first
The rich clove-dressing which he did invent,
In the rank garden where his kind is nurst;
And save the others of that spendthrift band
'Mongst whom his wealth of vineyards and of
shade
Caccia d' Asciano scattered with light hand,
And Abbagliato his good sense displayed!
But wouldst thou know who seconds thus the spit
Of thy hard speech against Sienna's race,
Sharpen thine eye, and fix on me thy sight,
That thou more fairly mayst peruse my face.
So shalt thou see I am Capocchio's ghost,
He that by alchemy false metals made;
And if I scan thee rightly, well thou know'st
How Nature's ape right cunningly I played."

CANTO THE THIRTIETH.

When Juno, stung through Semele, was moved
To such a hatred of her Theban race,
As more than one malign occasion proved,
Such frenzy fell upon King Athamas
That he shrieked out, when once his wife he met,
To either hand of whom an infant clung:
"Ho! spread for yonder lioness the net,
That I may snare the mother and her young."
Then flinging forth his pitiless claws, he took
Little Learchus; whirled him round and round,
And dashed the body lifeless on a rock,
While she herself and other offspring drowned.
And when harsh fortune shattered so the pride
Which dared do all things, of the Trojan race,
That with their king their kingdom also died;
Hecuba, widowed, captive, in disgrace,
After that her Polyxena in gore
She had beheld, and, grief-worn mother! marked
Her Polydorus dead upon the shore,
Mad with her misery, like a mastiff barked
(Such power had anguish to distort her mind).
But furies, Theban or of Troy, not then
Nor were seen ever, in so fell a kind,
Goading even beasts, much less the limbs of men,
As in two ghosts that I saw rushing by,

Naked and pale, and snapping as they sprang,
Mad as a boar-pig shut out from the sty.
One in Capocchio's neck-joint stuck his fang,
Dragging him down, until his belly grated
The solid bottom, while the Aretine
Exclaimed to me, as trembling he awaited:
"Yon sprite 's Gian Schicchi; with such frenzied
mien
He rages round, assaulting this poor pack."
"Oh!" answered I; "have patience yet, I pray,
So may its teeth have mercy on thy back:
Who is yon other? Ere it vanish, say."

And he to me: "Thou seest the ancient shade
Of sinful Myrrha, one that, overwarm
With love not filial for her father, made
Wanton with him, in counterfeited form;
Even as yon other, that he might obtain
The lady of the herd, with wicked skill
Buoso Donati's person dared to feign,
Fixing a false seal to a forgèd will."
And when that furious pair had passed along
Whom I had kept mine eye so bent on seeing,
I turned its gaze to note the following throng
Of ill-born wretches; and beheld a being
Shaped like a lute, had but the groin been cleft
From his forked portion. Dropsy's heavy woe,
By which our human members are bereft,

Through perverse humors, of proportion so
That none betwixt the face and paunch remains,
Forced him to keep his parching lips asunder,
As hectic sufferers do, whom thirst constrains
To lift the upper one, and drop the under.

"O ye that stand there, and I know not why,
Without a penance, in this world of gloom!"
He said to us, "give heed with ear and eye
To Master Adam's miserable doom:
On earth of all I wished I had my fill,
And now, alas! one drop of water crave.
The little brooks that every verdurous hill
Of Casentino pours to Arno's wave,
Freshening the soft, cool channels where they glide,
Still haunt my vision, nor in vain do haunt;
Far more by their dear image I am dried
Than by this drouth which makes my visage gaunt.
Stern Justice thus doth rigidly devise
That the same place wherein I sinned should be
The occasion still of never-ceasing sighs;
For there Romena stands, dread name for me!
'T was there I falsified the metal's worth
On which the Baptist's impress had been made,
Wherefore I left my body burned on earth:
But might I see down here the suffering shade
Of Alexander, or the County Guy,
Ay, or their brother's, I 'd not give that sight

For all the drink fount Branda could supply.
One is already in this woeful plight,
If these mad shadows that go raging round
Amid their fury can the truth relate:
But what avails it me with limbs thus bound?
Were I so light that I could drag my weight
An inch a century, I had, ere this,
Hunted him out amid this shapeless brood,
Though eleven miles this pit wind round the aby
Nor less than half a mile of width include.
'T is through their means that I 'm with such
race:
They tempted me to coin those florins fair
Which with three carats of alloy were base."
And I to him: "Who are yon groveling pair
At thy right hand there, steaming on the ground,
Like a wet hand in winter?" He replied:
"When I rained down here, those two souls
found;
And since that time they motionless abide.
Nor shall they stir, I guess, for evermore.
Sinon from Troy is one, that faithless Greek;
And one false witness against Joseph bore:
'T is the sharp fever makes them so to reek."

The former then, as though his name to hear
Vilified thus enraged he had become,
Struck the swoln belly with a fist severe,

That made it vibrate, ringing like a drum.
But Master Adam at his visage straight
Aimed back the blow, with arm that seemed as hard,
Saying: "What though these members by their weight
Are from all faculty of motion barred?
I have an arm yet free for such a use."
"Ah!" the Greek answered, "when thou wast conveyed
Bound to the stake, thy hands were not so loose;
Though free enough when those bad coins they made."
"Thou speak'st more true," the dropsied wretch replies,
"Than when they bade thee tell the truth at Troy."
"Well," answered Sinon, "if I uttered lies,
Uttering false moneys was thy base employ;
And for one falsehood I am here, indeed,
But thou for more than any fiend in Hell."

"Bethink thee, perjurer, of thy wooden steed!"
The gross one cried; "the world knows that trick well:
Be that thy torment!" — "Be thine own the drought,"
Returned the Greek, "which thy cracked tongue so dries,

And the rank liquid that so swells thee out,
Making that paunch a hedge before thine eyes."
"Still, as of old, wide gapes thy ready jaw
To give malignant words," the coiner said;
"If I have thirst, if moisture bloat my maw,
Thine is the burning, thine the anguished head.
Nay, and to lick Narcissus' mirror dry
But little urging wouldst thou need, I trow!"

Thus jangled they, while I stood waiting by,
Until the Master said: "Keep staring now!
A little more, and we shall quarrel too."
Soon as I felt that he with anger spake,
Towards him I turned with so much shame that through
My memory still disturbance it doth wake.
And like a man who dreams of some hard lot,
And, dreaming, wishes it were but a dream,
And so desires what is as though 't were not,
Thus in my dumb confusion did I seem!
Seeking excuse, I found the excuse I sought,
Yet knew it not. The Master then to me:
"To greater fault less shame had pardon brought:
So from all sadness have thy spirit free;
And, if chance e'er again thy footsteps guide
Where in like manner men display their ire,
Remember I am ever at thy side.
To list such wrangling is a low desire."

CANTO THE THIRTY-FIRST.

THE tongue that flushed my cheeks with so severe
A reprimand, a healing balm conveyed.
Thus, I am told, could the paternal spear
Of great Achilles cure the wound it made.
Now from that woeful vale we turned away,
Crossing the bank that girds it, without speech.
Here less it was than night, and less than day,
So that not far my visual power could reach:
But the deep note of a loud-pealing horn,
Such as had even the loudest thunder drowned,
In the direction whence the peal was borne,
Drew my intent eyes, following towards the sound.
So dread a blast Orlando did not blow,
After the doleful rout, when Charlemagne
Met, in his holy enterprise, o'erthrow.
Looking a little up towards that harsh strain,
Many tall towers methought I could descry.
"Master," I asked, "what sort of town is this?"
He answered me: "The distance which thine eye
Travels in darkness makes thy sight amiss:
Therefore thy fancy runs a little wild.
Thou shalt see well, if thou approach the place,
How much the eye by distance is beguiled:
Now, then, a little onward prick thy pace!"

Tenderly then he took my hand, and, "Here,"
Continued he, "ere further we have gone,
Know, that the fact less startling may appear,
Giants, not towers, are those thou gazest on.
There in the central well are all immersed,
Each from his navel down, about the bank."
As when a fog breaks, ere it be dispersed,
Little by little from the dark and dank
The sight shapes out those objects hid before,
Thus, piercing that gross air, and getting near
And nearer still to the surrounding shore,
Mine error fled; but instant grew my fear.

As Montereggion stands with turrets crowned
About its circuit, thus these giants grim,
Towering with half their persons, rose around
And overtopped the pit's encircling rim.
These are the fiends at whom Jove still doth lau
Threats when he thunders. I already traced
The face of one, great portion of his paunch,
Shoulders and breast, and arms adown his waist.
Sure, Nature, when her hand forbore the skill
To make such monsters, had a wise intent,
Taking from Mars those ministers of ill;
And if she do not of her whales repent,
And elephants, who closely thinks will find
That she herein a just discretion shows:
For were ill will and strength gifted with mind,

Vainly would men such argument oppose.
As long and large a visage he upreared
As is Saint Peter's pine at Rome, and such
His other bones proportionedly appeared:
Since from the bank that girt his waist so much
Of his vast form was visible that three
Tall Frieslanders could not have reached his hair;
Thirty good palms of him mine eye could see,
Below where men their cloak-clasps use to wear.

"*Ràpheghi màhameth ìzabig halmi!*" Thus
The savage mouth, which hymns of sweeter note
Would ill agree with, straight saluted us.
"Fool," said my Leader, "hush thy clamorous throat!
Soul of confusion! with thy horn alone
Vent thy brute fury, for that brays it best.
Search on thy neck there; thou wilt find the zone
That binds it dangling round thy giant breast."
Then thus to me: "The slave is self-accused;
Nimrod that is, to whose bad thought is due
That in the world one language is not used;
There let him stand, nor vain discourse pursue,
For every language is to him a sound,
Like his to others; jargon without sense."
So leftward turned, a bowshot on we found
Another, far more fierce, of size immense.

What master-hand had power those limbs to bind
I cannot say; but both his arms were fast,
The left before him, and the right behind,
Held by a chain which round his form was cast-
From his neck down, five circles of the chain
Were plain to view. "That haughty spirit strove,"
My Leader said, "and so deserves his pain,
To match his might against the most high Jove-
'T is Ephialtes; great his exploits were,
When giant rebels filled the Gods with dread;
But those huge arms he nevermore shall stir."
"Master, if it were possible," I said,
"The measureless Briareus I would see."
He answered thus: "Antæus, if thou wilt,
Thou mayst behold; he speaks, his limbs are free;
He shall convey us to the depths of guilt.
Near us he stands: the other one for whom
Thou hast inquired is yonder distant far,
Fettered like this one, by an equal doom;
But still more terrible his features are."
Never did earthquake with so violent shock
Strongly and suddenly a turret shake
As Ephialtes 'gan to reel and rock;
Nor e'er did I with fear of death so quake:
Save that I saw the bonds that held him fast,
Terror alone had slain me on the spot!
But now we reached Antæus, towering vast,
Without the head, full five ells forth his grot.

"O thou that, in the vale where fortune led
Scipio to glory (when in such dismay
Great Hannibal, with all his heroes, fled),
Didst bear a thousand lions for thy prey!
Through whose assistance, hadst thou only striven,
Leagued with thy brothers in the lofty fray,
Many there be who think, despite of Heaven,
That earth's proud children might have won the day!
Be now our convoy, nor disdain the task,
Where the numb winter locks Cocytus' flow:
Bid us nor Tityos nor Typhœus ask.
What here you crave, this mortal can bestow!
Stoop, then, nor curl thy nostril in disdain:
To sound thy fame on earth still, he hath power;
He lives, and long time living will remain,
Unless to her Grace call him, ere his hour."

The monster straight, as thus the Master-bard,
Stretched his huge hands forth, and my Leader clasped
Those hands that erst wrung Hercules full hard.
And Virgil, when he felt himself thus grasped,
Said: "Hither! let mine arms thy form inclose:"
Thus we became one burden, he and I.
And as the tower of Carisenda shows
To one beneath it, if a cloud go by,
So that the tower hangs adverse to the cloud,

Such looked Antæus, watching as I stood
To see him bend; and, as his figure bowed,
I would have fain some other way pursued.
But at the base of the devouring den,
Where Judas lies with Lucifer, at last
He lightly set us down, and straight again
Lifted himself up like a vessel's mast.

CANTO THE THIRTY-SECOND.

HAD I rhymes harsh and rude enough in sound
To suit the nature of the dismal den
Which all the rocks hang buttressing around,
My full conceit should have expression then;
But lacking these, I fear my speech is faint:
For 't is no task wherewith to be amused,
The bottom of the universe to paint,
Nor for a tongue to infant lispings used.
But may those virgins make my verse exact,
Who helped Amphion build his Theban wall,
And give me utterance not below the fact.
And O ye wretches! most ill-starred of all,
Of whose abode 't is terrible to tell,
Better had you been goats on earth, or sheep!
Being now down within the gloomy well,
Under the giant's feet, but far more deep.
And while the lofty wall I still admired,

I heard this voice: "Be careful of thy tread!
Let not thy trampling soles offend these tired,
Sad brethren here, nor bruise them on the head."
Turning whereat, beneath me and before,
I saw a lake that seemed to be of glass
Rather than water, so 't was frozen o'er.
Never did winter with so gross a mass
Veil Austrian Danube or the river Don
There under that cold sky; had Tambernich
Or Pietrapana's mountain fallen thereon,
Not even its rim had creaked, it lay so thick.
And as a frog squats croaking from a stream,
With nose put forth, what time the village maid
Oft in her slumber doth of gleaning dream,
Stood in the ice there every doleful shade,
Livid as far as where shame paints the cheek,
And doomed their faces downward still to hold.
Chattering like storks, their weeping eyes bespeak
Their aching hearts; their mouths, the biting cold.

I looked around me for a while; then fixed
My gaze below, on two just under us,
So linked together that their hairs were mixed.
"O ye," said I, "who breast each other thus!
Tell who ye are." Hereat their necks they bent;
And looking up, as they their faces showed,
Their eyes, in which the moisture had been pent,
Dropped icy tears which down their lips o'erflowed.

These freezing straight, their eyelids closely shut:
Never were planks by clamp so closely held;
Whence they, like two he-goats, began to butt
Each other blindly, by such wrath compelled;
And one whose ears the frost had gnawed away,
Still hanging down his countenance, exclaimed:
"Why dost thou eye us with that sharp survey?
Know, if thou 'rt wondering how those two are named,
The vale from which Bisenzio's water runs
Down into Arno once belonged to them
And Count Alberto; for they were his sons,
And both were issue of a single stem.
Thou shalt not find, search all Caìna through,
One soul more worthy in this ice to stand:
Not even that wretch whom royal Arthur slew,
Body and shadow piercing with one brand;
No, nor Focaccia; nor this other ghost
That with his head obstructeth so my sight:
If thou 'rt a Tuscan, him full well thou know'st,
For Sassol Mascheroni was he hight.
And I, that thou mayst further question spare,
Am Camicione, waiting to behold
Carlin, whose guilt shall make my foulness fair."

A thousand visages I saw, by cold
Turned to dog-faces: horror chills me through
Whenever of those frozen fords I think.

And as we nearer to the centre drew,
Towards which all bodies by their weight must sink,
There, as I shivered in the eternal chill,
Trampling among the heads, it happed by luck
Or destiny, or, it may be, my will,
Hard in the face of one my foot I struck.
Weeping, he cried: "What brings thee bruising us?
Unless on me fresh vengeance thou wouldst pile
For Mont' Aperti, why torment me thus?"
And I: "My Master, wait for me awhile,
That I through him may set one doubt at rest;
Then, if thou bid me hasten on, I will."
My Leader stopped; and I the shade addressed,
Who kept full bitterly blaspheming still:
"Say, who art thou whose tongue so foully speaks?"
"Nay, who art thou that walk'st the withering air
Of Antenora, smiting others' cheeks,
Which, wert thou living, 't were too much to bear?"
"Living I am; and thou, if craving fame,
Mayst count it precious," this was my reply,
"That I with other notes record thy name."
He answered thus: "Far other wish have I.
Trouble me now no longer; get thee gone.
Thine is cold flattery in this waste of Hell."
At this his hindmost hairs I fastened on,

And cried: "Thy name! I'll force thee now to
tell,
Or not one hair upon thy head shall grow."
He answered thus: "Although thou pluck me
bare,
I'll neither tell my name, nor visage show;
Nay, though a thousand times thou rend my hair."

I held his tresses in my fingers wound;
And more than one tuft had I twitched away,
As he, with eyes bent down, howled like a hound,
When one cried out: "What ails thee, Bocca?
Say.
Canst thou not make enough clack with thy jaws,
But thou must bark, too? What fiend pricks thee
now?"
"Aha!" said I, "henceforth I have no cause
To bid thee speak, thou cursèd traitor, thou!
I'll shame thee, bearing truth of thee to men."
"Away!" he answered: "what thou wilt, relate;
But, shouldst thou get from hence with breath
again,
Mention him, too, so ready with his prate.
Here he bewails that silver of the French.
'I saw Duera's lord,' thou mayst declare,
'Down where the sinners in the coolness blench.'
And if thou 'rt asked what other souls were there,
Beside thee Beccarìa stands, whose throat

Florence did cut. Beyond, Soldànier's shade,
And Ganellon, and Tribaldello note,
Who, while Faenza slept, her gates betrayed."

Him had we left, when, in a single gap
Fast froze together, other two I saw,
So that one head was its companion's cap;
And as a famished man a crust might gnaw,
So gnawed the upper one the wretch beneath,
Just where the neck-bone's marrow joins the brain:
Not otherwise did Tydeus fix his teeth
On Menalippus' temples in disdain.
While thus he mumbled skull and hair and all,
I cried: "Ho! thou who show'st such bestial hate
Of him on whom thy ravenous teeth so fall,
Why feed'st thou thus? On this agreement state;
That, if thou have good reason for thy spite,
Knowing you both, and what his crime was, I
Up in the world above may do thee right,
Unless the tongue I talk with first grow dry."

CANTO THE THIRTY-THIRD.

FROM his foul feast that sinner raised his jaw,
Wiping it on the hair, first, of the head
Whose hinder part his craunching had made raw.
Then thus: "Thou wouldst that I renew," he said,

"The agony which still my heart doth wring,
In thought even, ere a syllable I say;
But if my words may future harvest bring,
To the vile traitor here on whom I prey,
Of infamy, then thou shalt hear me speak,
And see my tears, too! I know not thy mien,
Nor by what means this region thou dost seek;
But by thy tongue thou 'rt sure a Florentine.

"Know then, Count Ugolino once was I,
And this Archbishop Ruggieri: fate
Makes us close neighbors; I will tell thee why.
'T is needless all the story to relate,
How through his malice, trusting in his word,
I was a prisoner made, and, after, slain.
But that whereof thou never canst have heard
(I mean how cruelly my life was ta'en)
Thou shalt hear now, and thenceforth know if he
Have done me wrong. A loophole in the mew
Which hath its name of Famine's Tower from me,
And where his doom some other yet must rue,
Had shown me now already through its cleft
Moon after moon, when that ill dream I dreamed
Which from futurity the curtain reft.
He, in my vision, lord and master seemed,
Hunting the wolf and wolf-cubs on the height
Which screeneth Lucca from the Pisan's eye:

With eager hounds well trained and lean and light,
Gualandi and Lanfranchi darted by,
With keen Sismondi; these the foremost went.
But after some brief chase, too hardly borne,
The sire and offspring seemed entirely spent,
And by sharp fangs their bleeding sides were torn.

"When, before morn, from sleep I raised my head,
I heard my boys in prison there with me
Moaning in slumber, and demanding bread.
If thou weep not, a savage thou must be!
Nay, if thou weep not, thinking of the fear
My heart foreboded, canst thou weep at aught?
Now they woke, also, and the hour was near
When used our daily pittance to be brought.
His dream made each mistrustful; and I heard
The door of that dread tower nailed up below:
Then in my children's eyes, without a word
I gazed, but moved not; and I wept not: so
Like stone I was within that I could not!
They wept, though; and my little Anselm cried:
'Thou look'st so, father! what's the matter, what?'
But still I wept not, nor a word replied
All that long day, nor all the following night,
Till earth beheld the sun's returning ray.
As soon as one faint gleam of morning light
Stole to the dismal dungeon where we lay,
And soon as those four visages I saw

Imaging back the horror of mine own,
Both hands through anguish I began to gnaw;
And they, believing want of food alone
Compelled me, started up and cried: 'Far less,
Dear father, it will torture us if thou
Shouldst feed on us! Thou gavest us this dress
Of wretched flesh: 't is thine, and take it now.'
So, to relieve their little hearts, at last
I calmed myself; and all in silence thus,
That, and the next day, motionless we past.
Ah, thou hard earth! why didst not ope for us?

"On the fourth morning, Gaddo at my feet
Cast himself prostrate, murmuring: 'Father! why
Dost thou not help me? Give me food to eat.'
With that he died; and even so saw I,
As thou seest me now, three more, one by one,
Betwixt the fifth day and the sixth day fall;
By which time, sightless grown, o'er each dear son
I groped, and two days on the dead did call.
But what grief could not do, hunger did then."
This said, he rolled his eyes askance, and fell
To gnaw the skull with greedy teeth again,
Strong as a dog's upon the bony shell.

Ah, Pisa! shame of all in that fair land
Where *si* is uttered, since thy neighbors round
Take vengeance on thee with a tardy hand,

Broke be Capraja's and Gorgona's bound!
Let them dam Arno's mouth up, till the wave
Whelm every soul of thine in its o'erflow!
What though 't was said Count Ugolino gave,
Through treachery, thy strongholds to the foe,
Thou need'st not have tormented so his sons,
Thou modern Thebes! their youth saved them
from blame:
Brigata, Hugh, and those two innocent ones
Whom, just above, the canto calls by name.

We now passed on, to where another race
In the rough bondage of the frost is pent,
Hanging not down, but holding up the face,
Whose very weeping weeping doth prevent.
The tears, which at their eyes a barrier find,
Are forced within to make their anguish more;
For the first drops clog those that come behind,
The cup with crystal visor glazing o'er.
And though no longer much sensation dwelt
In my own visage, callous from the cold,
Methought a breeze upon my cheek I felt,
And of my Master would the cause be told.
"Is not all wind," I said, "spent here below?"
He answered: "Fast thou art approaching where
Thy very eye the meet response will show,
Seeing the source which poureth such an air."
And one of those sad souls in that cold crust

Cried: "O ye spirits of so cruel kind
That to the lowest region ye are thrust!
These frozen curtains from mine eyes unbind;
Let me a little vent this bursting heart
Before again my gathering tears congeal."
I answered him: "First tell me who thou art,
If thou wouldst have me those glazed orbs unseal;
And if I free thee not, may I be sunk
Down to the bottom of this ice!" "My name,"
The wretch replied, "is Alberic the monk;
I 'm he whose fruit from no good garden came:
Now for those figs of mine I get this date."

"What! art thou dead, then?" I exclaimed; and he
Answered me thus: "I know not in what state
My body in the upper world may be.
This one advantage beareth over all
The rest of Hell our Ptolemæan part,
That oft the soul is hither doomed to fall
Ere Atropos compel its final start.
That thou more willingly mayst rub away
These frozen drops that overglaze my face,
Learn that no sooner doth a soul betray,
As I did, than a demon takes its place
Who rules the body till its term be run,
While to this cistern here the soul is hurled;
Even now perchance the body of this one,

Who winters here behind me, walks the world!
If thou but newly art descended here,
His outward semblance haply thou mayst know:
That 's Master Branca Doria; many a year
Hath glided by since he was chained below."

"Now I believe thou 'rt mocking me," said I;
"For Branca Doria surely hath not gone
To his grave yet, but in the world on high
Eats, drinks, and sleeps, and putteth raiment on."
"Ere to the fosse of those curst-claws," he said,
"Up where the pitch boils, Michel Zanche came,
This caitiff left a devil in his stead,
Yea, in his own and in a kinsman's frame,
One who shared with him in his traitorous plot.
But put thy hand forth now and let me see:
Open mine eyelids!" And I oped them not:
Rudeness was courtesy to such as he.

Ah, Genoese, men wanting in all worth,
With every taint of wickedness accurst!
Why are ye not swept off the face of earth?
Seeing that with this spirit, far the worst
Even of Romagna, one of you I found
Who, for his eminence in works of ill,
Hath his soul down there in Cocytus drowned,
Yet seems, above, alive in body still.

CANTO THE THIRTY-FOURTH.

"*Vexilla Regis prodeunt Inferni,* —
The flags are flying of the King of Hell!
Towards us they wave: so, look," the Master said,
"Before thee now, if thou see him as well."
As when a thick fog all things hath o'erspread,
Or darkness veils our hemisphere, oft shows
A mill, far off, whose wheels by wind are sped,
Appeared a frame in front of me that rose.
Then, finding from the blast that swept along
No shelter else, behind my Guide I shrunk,
And saw (with fear I set it in my song)
That, where I was, the shades were wholly sunk.
Through the clear ice their forms were plain to sight,
Like splints in glass, erect, or lying low;
One with soles up, and one with head upright;
Another, face to foot, bent like a bow.
Soon as my Lord had led me on to where
His pleasure 't was to point to my survey
The being that was once, outside, so fair,
He from before me passed, and bade me stay.
"Lo, Dis!" he said, "and lo, the place where thou
Hast need to arm thy soul with all its might!"
How frozen I became, how helpless now,
Ask me not, reader! 't is not mine to write;

And forms of speech would all too trivial be;
I was not dead, yet scarce alive remained:
Think for thyself, if genius bloom in thee,
What my state was, whom neither state contained.

At mid-breast, rising from the ice, on high
He towered, who sways that empire of despair;
And more my size might with a giant's vie
Than giants could with even his arms compare:
Judge what the whole must be of such a part!
If, once as beauteous as he now is grim,
He on his Maker scowled in scorn of heart,
Well may all miseries have their source in him!

Oh, what a marvel it appeared to me
When I beheld upon the monster's head
More than one countenance! for he had three:
One face he bare in front, and that was red;
The other twain, that did with this unite,
Just o'er the middle of each shoulder grew,
Combining where his crest had place: the right
Was mingled white and yellow in its hue;
The left was such in color as the race
Wear of that land whence Nile sends down his stream.
Two mighty pinions rose from 'neath each face,
Such as might best so huge a fowl beseem;
Plumes had they none, but more like bat than bird:

Sails on the sea I never saw like those;
And them he flapped, and so to motion stirred
Three winds, whose fanning all Cocytus froze.
A bloody slaver down his triple chin
Flowed, mixed with tears, from those six eyes that
came;
And in each mouth, as 't were his teeth had been
A sort of brake, he champed a sinner's frame:
Thus three he held in his tormenting clutch.
To him in front, the biting, if compared
With the ferocious clawing, was not much;
For oft his back of skin was wholly bared.

"That foremost soul up there," the Master said,
"Whose limbs are quivering with intenser pain,
Is Judas, called Iscariot: see! his head
Inside he hath, outside his legs remain.
Brutus is one of those, with heads down-hung,
Dangling from that black jaw: take note of him,
How he doth wring; yet silence chains his tongue.
Cassius that other is, more large of limb.
But the night cometh up again; and now
We must depart: we have seen everything."

His neck I girdled then (he teaching how),
While he chose time and place, when every wing
Was on the stretch: when they were wide enough,
Grasping the woolly ribs, from lock to lock

He clambered down, betwixt the creature's rough
Thick-matted tufts and that ice-crusted rock.
When we had reached the swelling of the joint
Where turns the thigh, my Leader, struggling sore,
Turned round with pains, precisely at this point,
His head to where his feet had been before;
And as he grappled hard the shaggy hairs
Like a man climbing, back to Hell, methought,
I was returning. "Take fast hold! such stairs,"
The Master gasped, like one with toil o'erwrought,
"Must serve us now such wickedness to quit."
Then through an opening in a rock he passed,
And placing me upon its brink to sit,
With caution moved; and stopped near me at last.
I raised mine eyes, expecting still to see
Lucifer, just as I had left him there,
Standing erect; and he appeared to me
Inverted, with his legs up in the air.

Then if confusion struck me not aghast,
The multitude may guess, whose grosser eyes
Heed not what point it is I just had passed.
"Now," said the Master, "to thy feet arise:
Long is the journey, and the way not good;
Towards his third hour the sun hath half-way
risen."
No corridor it was, wherein we stood,
Of some fair palace, but a natural prison;

Its ground was craggy, and it wanted light.
And, "O my Master! ere from this abyss
I make escape," said I, when once upright,
"Draw me from error first, and tell me this:
Where is the ice? and this huge figure, how
Comes he reversed thus strangely? and the sun?
How happeneth it that he already now
From night to morning hath his journey run?"

He answered thus: "Thou fanciest thou art still
That side the centre, where I grasped the hair
Of the bad worm that bores through earth with
ill.
While I descended, thou indeed wast there,
But when I turned, the central point we passed
Towards which all weights draw, from on every
hand:
Thou 'rt under now this hemisphere whose vast
Opposes that, covering the great dry land,
Beneath whose zenith, suffering for your sakes,
The Sinless-born without sin lived and died.
Thy feet are on a lesser sphere which makes
Of the Giudecca's base the outer side.
'T is morning here when there the sun hath set;
And he, the shaggy ladder of our way,
Fixed, as he fell from Heaven, abideth yet.
This side he fell: the land then, in dismay,
Though erst projecting, sought your hemisphere,

And sank in ocean, him perchance to fly.
Whatever now doth on this side appear
Left here this void, and trembling rushed on high."

A place there is 'neath Beelzebub extending
Far as his tomb is deep; unseen, but known
By the low murmur of a rill descending
A chasm its course hath gnawed out in the stone,
Falling not much, but winding as it flows;
Into which secret way my Guide and I
Entered to pass, not caring for repose,
Back to the beautiful bright world on high,
And clambered up, he ever leading on,
Until Heaven's lovely things, within my ken,
Through a round opening in the cavern shone:
And thence we rose to see the stars again.

PURGATORY.

PURGATORY.

CANTO THE FIRST.

THE little vessel of my genius now
Hoists sail o'er better waves to follow helm,
Turning from sea so terrible its prow:
And I will sing now of that second realm
Wherein are purified the souls of men,
Until of Heaven they worthy shall have grown.
But here dead poesy must rise again:
O sacred Muses! I am now your own.
Nor let Calliope here fall below,
But soar to my song! with that epic strain
Whereof those wretched magpies felt the blow
So that their hope of pardon was but vain.

Of oriental sapphire that sweet blue
Which overspread the beautiful serene
Of the pure ether, far as eye could view
To Heaven's first circle, brightened up my mien,
Soon as I left that atmosphere of death

Which had my heart so saddened with mine eyes.
The beauteous planet which gives love new breath
With laughing light cheered all the orient skies,
Dimming the Fishes that her escort made;
Then, turning to my right, I stood to scan
The southern pole, and four stars there surveyed,
Save the first people, never seen by man:
Heaven seemed rejoicing in their blazing rays.
O widowed north, how much art thou bereft,
That constellation hidden from thy gaze!
Ceasing my look, a little towards the left
(The pole whence now the Wain had disappeared)
I turned, and saw an old man all alone
Near me, whose aspect claimed to be revered;
More might no father claim it of a son.
His beard was long and streaked, as was his hair,
Which fell in two lengths down his breast, with white.
The rays of those four sacred splendors there
So sprinkled o'er his countenance with light
It seemed to me the sun before me stood!
And thus he spake, shaking those reverend plumes:

"Say, who are ye 'gainst the dark stream who could
Fly, as ye have, the eternal dungeon's glooms?
Who was your guide? Who lighted you the way
Escaping forth from that profoundest night
Which makes the infernal valley black for aye?

The laws of that abyss, are they so slight?
Or is the purpose changed which Heaven did please,
That ye, condemned, approach these crags of mine?"
Here my Lord beckoned me to bend my knees
And brows (words adding to his touch and sign),
Then answered thus: "My will was not my guide;
A maid from Heaven besought me so to bear
This being company that I complied.
More of our state wouldst have me to declare,
Thy will to gainsay, my will cannot be:
This man hath never seen life's closing even,
But, through his folly, came so nigh to see
That for escape but little space was given.
Therefore was I, as I have told thee, sent
To turn him back; and other way was none
Save this to which my guidance I have lent.
All the bad spirits I to him have shown,
And purpose now revealing to him those
Who under thee their natures purify.
'T were long how I have led him to disclose,
But a grace aids me, granted from on high,
To bring him thus to see thee and to hear:
Now may it please thee, greet him fair! He goes
In quest of liberty, that is so dear;
How dear, who spurneth life for freedom knows.
Thou know'st! who didst in Utica delight
To die for her, doffing that vestment there

Which at the last great day shall show so white.
Unchanged for us the eternal edicts are:
This man yet lives, and Minos binds not me;
I come from where thy Marcia's chaste eyes shine,
Who seems in aspect still imploring thee,
O sacred breast! that thou wilt keep her thine.
Then for her love incline thee to our prayer;
Through thy seven kingdoms grant us leave to go:
Thy grace I gratefully will tell her where
She dwells, if thou deign mentioning below."

"Marcia delighted so mine eyes above,
While I was there," he answered, "that I gave
Whate'er she asked me freely to her love.
But now she dwells that side the wicked wave
She cannot move me longer: I am stayed
By laws which when I came thence were decreed.
But since thou tell'st me a celestial maid
Urges and guides thee, of fair words what need?
Enough her name to sanction thy demand.
Go then! and let this being with a plain
Smooth reed be girt, and wash with thine own hand
His visage pure from every soil and stain;
For, until every dimness be dispersed,
It were not fitting to beclouded eyes
To come before the one who sits the first
Angel, a ministrant of Paradise.
Round its low margent, on the yielding ooze,

Down by the low strand where the waves have strife,
This isle bears reeds: not any plant which grows
Hard, or that puts forth leaf, may there have life,
For no such stem to every stroke would bow.
In fine, not this way look to journey back:
The sun will show you, which is rising now,
To take this mountain at some easier track."
Herewith he vanished: I straightway did rise
Without a word, and toward my guiding One
All closely drew, fastening on him mine eyes,
Who thus began: "Follow my steps, my son.
Turn we back this way; for this way," he said,
"The shore sinks low to where its limits are."

Now day's white light had quelled the morning's red
Which fled before it, so that from afar
I recognized the trembling of the main.
Like one who turns to find a pathway lost,
And till he find it seems to walk in vain,
Silent that solitary plain we crossed.
When we had come to where the dewdrops pass
But slowly off (by reason of the shade
The sun resisting), on the soft small grass
His outstretched palms my Master gently laid:
Whence I, acquainted with his act's intent,
Held up my cheeks all wet with tears to him,
While he restored unto my face besprent

My natural hue, which Hell had made so grim.
We came soon after to the desert shore
Which never yet beheld a man who had
Come back, once having crossed those waters o'er.
Here then he girded me as Cato bade:
Oh, how miraculous! with instant growth
Sprang up immediately another spray
In the same spot (and of the same kind both)
Whence he had plucked the lowly reed away.

CANTO THE SECOND.

Now that horizon whose meridian arch
Hangs o'er Jerusalem its topmost height,
The sun had reached; while opposite, her march
Holding in counter-course, the circling night
Walked forth from Ganges, bearing in her hand
The Scales that she lets fall with her advance.
So fair Aurora's cheeks, by ripe age tanned,
From white and red grew orange to my glance.

Still by the sea we made some brief delay,
Like lingering men that on their journey dream,
Who go in spirit, but in body stay:
And lo! as when, surprised by morning's beam,
Through the gross vapors Mars doth redly burn
Down in the west upon the ocean floor,

A light appeared (oh, may that light return!)
So rapidly those waters traveling o'er
That to its motion flying were but slow;
Then, having momently withdrawn my gaze
To question of my Guide, I looked, and lo!
Larger it burned, and seemed almost ablaze.
Soon from each side thereof, although I knew
Naught what they were, something appeared of white,
And underneath another of like hue
Little by little grew forth into sight.

My Master spake not; I meantime could spell
Wings in those first white objects at the side.
Soon as he recognized the pilot well,
"Behold God's angel! bend thy knees!" he cried;
"Lift up thy palms to him; henceforward more
Such heavenly delegates thou shalt behold!
Look how he scorns man's arguments of oar
And sail, but simply doth unfold
His own pure pinions (winnowing the air,
And heavenward stretching those eternal pens)
From shore to shore so distant; plumes that ne'er
Moult like the changing tresses that are men's."
Then as more near and nearer to us drew
That divine bird, so grew the splendor more,
Till scarce the eye could bear a closer view.
I bent mine down, and he arrived ashore

With a fleet skiff, so light upon the flood
That without wake it skimmed the water's breast.
High on the stern the heavenly helmsman stood,
In aspect such as Holy Writ calls blest.
More than an hundred spirits in one band
Within sat blending in one voice their strains,
"*In exitu Israèl*, from the land
Of Egypt," and what else that psalm contains.

The sign of holy cross he made them then,
Whereat they bounded all upon the strand,
And he, swift as he came, sped back again.
The crowd that stayed looked wildly round, and scanned
The place, like strangers coming to things new.
Now on all sides had Phœbus pierced the day
With his keen arrows, which so fiercely flew
That Capricorn was chased from Heaven's midway,
When the new-comers raised their brows to us,
Saying: "Show us the pathway, if ye know,
Up to the mountain." Virgil answered thus:
"Perchance you think we know this place; not so.
We, like yourselves, are only pilgrims here:
Just before you, and by another way,
We came a road so rugged, so severe,
That climbing this will seem thereto as play."
The spirits, by my breathing who could guess
That I was living, wan with wonder grew;

And just as people round a herald press
Who comes with olive wreaths, to hear what new
Tidings he bears, regardless how they tread,
Thus gathering round, those favored souls eyed me;
Each one, as 't were, forgetful how he sped
Towards where they go more beautiful to be.

One I beheld before the rest, who came
As to embrace me, with such look intense
Of love, it moved me to return the same.
Oh, save in aspect, shadows void of sense!
Three times my hands around his form I threw,
And thrice received them back upon my breast.
I think my face was tinged with wonder's hue;
For the shade smiled as after him I pressed,
And, I still following, he so sweetly said:
"Follow no longer." Whose that voice must be
I knew full well, and begged him, ere he fled,
To stay a little while to speak with me.

He answered me: "As in my mortal part
I loved thee once, I love thee loose from clay,
And therefore stop; but thou, why wandering art?"
"My dear Casella, I come not to stay,
And must return where I am dwelling still.
But tell me what has so delayed thy bliss?"
"If he who taketh whom and when he will
Refused my passage oft, no wrong was this,"

The shade replied; "to Heaven's his choice conforms:
These three months freely he hath carried o'er,
At their own pleasure, the peace-parted swarms;
Whence I, too, coasting by the sacred shore,
Where Tiber's waves grow salt, with gracious hand
Was gathered. Thitherward he now has gone,
Bending his pinions toward that opening strand,
Since all meet there who seek not Acheron."
Then I: "Unless the new laws here forbid
Memory or use of that love-laden style
Which all my longings once full gently chid,
Soothe with one song, beseech thee, for a while
This soul of mine! which, dragging here its clay,
Is so worn out." Directly he began,
"*Love reasons with me*," in so sweet a way
That the same sweetness I could hear, and can.
We stood, my Master and myself, as though
Naught else possessed us, and that shadowy swarm,
Rapt, listening round him to his notes; and lo!
That noble old man's venerable form
Came crying: "How now, tardy spirits! why
This negligence? why lingering do ye plod?
Run to the mountain, that from every eye
The scales may fall that seal your sight from God."

As doves (when busy gathering grain or tares,
Clustered at pasture in a single flock,

Quiet, nor showing their accustomed airs),
If aught approach the timid tribe to shock,
Fly from their food, assailed by greater care,
So quit the song this new-come troop, and started
Hillward, like one who goes unknowing where;
And with no less a pace, we, too, departed.

CANTO THE THIRD.

THOUGH round the plain their quick flight scattered them,
Bent for that hill where reason turns our tread,
My faithful Guide close at my garment's hem
I kept: how could I without him have sped?
Who else had o'er that mountain marshaled me?
He seemed, methought, as inly touched with shame:
O noble conscience void of stain, to thee
How sharp the bite is of the smallest blame!
Soon as his feet the hurried movement checked
Which every action's dignity destroys,
My mind, till now restrained and circumspect,
Expanded with new strength, as 't were of joy's.
My face I fixed upon that hill to gaze
Towards highest heaven which springeth from the wave;
The sun behind me redly flamed, its rays
Broke by the shadow which my figure gave.

When I perceived before me that the ground
Was darkened only by myself, in dread
Of being there deserted, I looked round;
And fronting me in full, my Comfort said:
"Why this distrust? Believ'st thou not that I
Am with thee still, thy leader to the last?
'T is evening now already where on high
My body lies (which once a shadow cast),
Buried at Naples, from Brundusium brought.
Now, if no shade before me meet thy sight,
It need wake no more marvel in thy thought
Than why one ray checks not another's light.
Omnipotence to such forms hath assigned
The power of suffering torments, cold and heat;
But how, reveals not to created kind.
He is but mad who hopes this incomplete
Reason of ours may track the infinite way,
Which of three persons holds the substance one.
Rest, human race, contented, when you say
Simply because could ye the whole have known
No need had been for Mary to have borne!
And ye have seen in hopeless longing those
Who now to all eternity must mourn
Desire for which they vainly sought repose.
Of Aristotle and of Plato now
I speak, and many others." He remained
Silent at this, and stood with bended brow
And troubled look: meantime the hill we gained.

We found the cliff here sloping so steep down
That nimblest legs had there been useless quite.
The wildest way betwixt Turbìa's town
And Lèrici, the roughest, were a flight,
Compared with this, of open easy stairs.
"Who knows," my Master said, and stayed his pace,
"Where this hill slopeth, so that one who wears
No wings may climb it?" then his earnest face
Directed closely to the ground, as if
Making in mind a study of the way.
Meantime I gazed up round about the cliff;
And on the left hand came to my survey
A band of spirits, moving on towards us,
That seemed not moving, for they came so slow.
"Lift up thine eyes," I to the Master thus:
"If of thyself thou art not certain, lo!
Yon souls our footsteps may direct, perchance."
Thereat he looked, then frankly made reply:
"Go we towards them, so gently they advance;
And thou, my sweet son! keep thy hope up high."

That people seemed as far, when we had gone
A thousand steps, I say, or thereabout,
As a good flinger might have cast a stone;
When all at once, like one who goes in doubt
And stops to look, their moderate march they checked,

And close to that high bank's hard masses drew.
"O ye peace-parted! O ye spirits elect!
Ev'n by that peace which waits for each of you,
As I believe," thus Virgil them bespake,
"Inform us where this mountain slopeth, so
That its ascent we may essay to make;
For they mourn time's loss most, the most wh
know."

Like lambs that issue from their fold, one, two,
Then three at once; the rest all standing shy,
With eye and nostril to the ground, that do
Then what the foremost doth, unknowing why,
And crowd upon her back if she but stand
(Quiet and simple creatures!), thus the head
I saw move towards us of the happy band,
Modest in face, and of a comely tread.

Soon as their leaders noticed that the light
On my right side lay broken at my feet,
So that my shadow reached the rocky height,
They stopped and drew a little in retreat.
And all the others following, though they knew
Naught why they drew back, did the very same.
"Without your question I confess to you
That here you see a living human frame:
Hence on the ground the sunlight thus is riven.
Marvel not at it, but believe ye all

Not without virtue by the Most High given
This man hath come to scale your mountain's wall."
My Master thus, and thus that gracious band:
"Turn then and join us, and before us go;"
And while some beckoned us with bended hand,
One called: "Whoe'er thou art there journeying so,
Turn! Think: hast ever looked on me before?"
I turned and gazed upon the one who spoke.
Handsome and blond, he looked high-born; but o'er
One brow appeared the severance of a stroke.
When I had humbly answered him that ne'er
Had I beheld him, "Look!" he said, and high
Up on his breast showed me a wound he bare;
Then added smilingly: "Manfred am I,
The Empress Constance' grandson: in such name
Do I entreat, when back thou shalt have gone,
To my fair daughter hie, of whose womb came
Sicily's boast and Aragon's renown;
And tell her this, if aught but truth be said,
That after two stabs, each of power to kill,
I gave my soul back, weeping ere it fled
To Him who pardoneth of His own free will.
My sins were horrible; but large embrace
Infinite Goodness hath, whose arms will ope
For every child who turneth back to grace;
And if Cosenza's bishop, by the Pope

Clement set on to hound me to the last,
That page of Holy Writ had better read,
My bones had still been sheltered from the blast
Near Benevento, by the bridge's head,
Under their load of stones; but now without
The realm they lie, by Verde's river, bare
For winds and rains to beat and blow about,
Dragged with quenched candles and with curses
there.
Yet not by their poor malediction can
Souls be so lost but that Eternal Love
May be brought back, while hope hath life in man.
'T is true that one who sets himself above
The Holy Church, and dies beneath its ban
(Even though he had repented at the last),
Outside this mount must unadmitted rove
Thirty times longer than the term had been
Of his presumptuous contumacy past,
Unless good prayers a shorter penance win.
See now what power thou hast to make me glad!
Report of me to my good Constance bear,
How thou saw'st me, and what I've told thee,
add;
For much it profits us what they do there.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

WHENE'ER the mind, from any joy or pain
In any faculty, to that alone
Bends its whole strength, its other powers remain
Unexercised, it seems (whereby is shown
Plain contradiction of the erroneous view
Which holds within us kindled several souls);
Hence, when we hear or see a thing whereto
The mind is strongly drawn, unheeded rolls
The passing hour; the man observes it not:
That power is one whereby we hear or see,
And that another which absorbs our thought;
This being chained, as 't were, the former free.

A real experience of this truth had I,
Listening that soul, and wondering at such force;
For now the sun full fifty degrees high
Had risen without my noticing his course,
When came we where the spirits, with one voice all,
Cried out to us: "Behold the place ye seek!"
A wider opening oft, in hedge or wall,
Some farmer, when the grape first browns its cheek,
Stops with one forkful of his brambles thrown,
Than was the narrow pass whereby my Guide

Began to climb, I following on alone,
While from our way I saw those wanderers glide.

A man may climb Saint Leo, or descend
The steeps of Noli, or Bismantua's height
Scale to the top, and on his feet depend;
Here one should fly! I mean he needs the light
Pinions and plumage of a strong desire,
Under such leadership as gave me hope
And lighted me my way. Advancing higher
In through the broken rock, it left no scope
On either side, but cramped us close; the ledge
O'er which we crept required both feet and hand
When we had toiled up to the utmost edge
Of the high bank, where the clear coast expands,
"Which way," said I, "my Master, shall we take?"
And he to me: "Let not thy foot fall back;
Still follow me, and for the mountain make,
Until some guide appear who knows the track."
Its top sight reached not, and the hillside rose
With far more salient angle than the line
That from half-quadrant to the centre goes.
Most weary was I. "Gentle Father mine,"
I thus broke silence, "turn and see that if
Thou stay not for me, I remain alone."
"Struggle, my son, as far as yonder cliff,"
He said, and pointed upwards to a zone
Terracing all the mountain on that side.

His word so spurred me that I forced myself,
And clambered on, still close behind my Guide,
Until my feet were on that girdling shelf.

Here we sat down, and turned our faces towards
The east, from which point we had made ascent
(For looking back on toil some rest affords);
And on the low shore first mine eyes I bent,
Then raised them sunward, wondering as I gazed
How his light smote us from the left. While thus
I stared, he marked how I beheld, amazed,
Day's chariot entering 'twixt the north and us.
"Were yonder mirror now," the Poet said,
"That with his light leads up and down the spheres,
In Castor and Pollux, thou wouldst see the red
Zodiac revolving closer to the Bears,
If it swerved nothing from its ancient course;
Which fact to fathom wouldst thou power command,
Imagine, with thy mind's collected force,
This mount and Zion so on earth to stand
That, though in adverse hemispheres, the twain
One sole horizon have: thence 't is not hard
To see (if clear thine intellect remain)
How the sun's road, which Phaethon, ill starred,
Knew not to keep, must pass that mountain o'er
On one, and this hill on the other side."

"Certes, my Master, ne'er saw I before
So clear as at this moment," I replied,
"Where seemed but now my understanding
maimed,
How the mid-circle of the heavenly spheres
And of their movements (the Equator named
In special term of art), which never veers
From its old course, 'twixt winter and the sun,
Yet for the reason thou dost now assign
Towards the Septentrion from this point doth ru
While to the Jews it bore a south decline.
But if it please thee, gladly would I learn
How far we have to journey; for so high
This hill soars that mine eyes cannot discern
The top thereof." He made me this reply:

"Such is this mountain that for one below
The first ascent is evermore severe;
It grows less painful higher as we go.
So when to thee it pleasant shall appear,
That no more toil thy climbing shall attend
Than sailing down the way the current flows,
Then art thou near unto thy pathway's end;
There from thy labor look to find repose.
I know that this is true, but say no more."
And this word uttered, not far off addressed
Me thus a voice: "It may be that before
That pass thou wilt have need to sit and rest."

At sound thereof we both looked round, and there
Beheld a huge rock, close to our left hand,
Whereof till now we had not been aware:
Thither we toiled, and in its shade a band
Behind it stood with a neglectful air,
As men in idleness are wont to stand.

And one was seated, hanging down his face
Between his knees, which he with languid limb,
Looking exhausted, held in his embrace.
"O my sweet Seignior!" I exclaimed, "note him!
Lazier looking than had laziness been
His sister born." Turning towards us, at length
He gazed, slow lifting o'er his thigh his chin,
And drawled: "Go up, then, thou who hast such strength."
I knew who that was then! and though the ascent
Had made me pant somewhat, I kept my pace,
Spite of short breath; close up to him I went,
And he droned forth, scarce lifting up his face:
"Hast thou found out yet how the sun this way
O'er thy left shoulder doth his chariot guide?"
His sloth, and what few words he had to say,
Made me smile slightly, and I thus replied:
"No more, Belacqua, do I mourn thy fate.
But tell me wherefore in this place I see
Thee sitting thus? Dost thou for escort wait,
Or has thine old slow habit seized on thee?"

And he: "O brother! what boots it to climb?
God's angel sitting at the gate denies
Me way to penance until so much time
Be past as, living, I beheld the skies.
Outside I must remain here for the crime
Of dallying to the last my contrite sighs,
Unless I happily some help derive
From the pure prayer ascending from a heart
That lives in grace; a prayer not thus alive
Heaven doth not hear: what aid can such impart?"

Now before me the Poet up the height
Began to climb, saying: "Come on, for o'er
This hill's meridian hangs the sun, and night
Sets foot already on Morocco's shore."

CANTO THE FIFTH.

ALREADY parted from those shades, I went
Following the footsteps of my Guide, when one
Behind me towards my form his finger bent,
Exclaiming: "See! no ray falls from the sun
To the left hand of him that walks below!
And sure! he moveth like a living man."
Mine eyes I turned, at hearing him say so,
And saw them with a gaze all wonder scan
Now me, still me, and now the broken light

My body caused. The Master then to me:
"Why let thy wonder keep thee from the height
To drag so slowly? What concerns it thee
What here is whispered? Only follow thou
After my steps, and let the crowd talk on:
Stand like a tower firm-based! that will not bow
Its head to breath of winds that soon are gone.
The man o'er whose thought second thought hath sway
Wide of his mark is ever sure to miss,
Because one force the other wears away."
What could I answer but "I come," to this?
I said it, something sprinkled with the hue
Which, in less faults, excuseth one from blame.
Meanwhile, across the mountain-side there drew,
Just in our front, a train that, as they came,
Sang *Miserere*, verse by verse. When they
Observed my form, and noticed that I gave
No passage through me to the solar ray,
Into a long hoarse "Oh!" they changed their stave;
And two, as envoys, ran up with demand:
"In what condition is it that ye go?"
And my Lord said: "Return ye to the band
Who sent you towards us, and give them to know
This body is true flesh. If they delayed
At sight (I deem so) of the shadow here,
Thereby sufficient answer shall be made:
Him let them reverence; it may prove dear."

I never saw a meteor dart so quick
Through the serene at midnight, or a gleam
Of lightning flash at sunset through a thick
Piled August cloud, but these would faster seem
As they retreated; having joined the rest,
Back like an unreined troop towards us they sped.
"This throng is large by whom we thus are pressed,
And come to implore of thee," the Poet said;
"Therefore keep on, and as thou mov'st attend."

"O soul who travelest, with the very frame
Which thou wert born with, to thy blessèd end,
Stay thy step somewhat!" Crying thus they came.
"Look if among us any thou dost know,
That thou of him to earth mayst tidings bear.
Stay! wilt thou not? Ah! wherefore must thou go?
We to our dying hour were sinners there,
And all were slain; but at the murderous blow
Warned us an instant light that flashed from Heaven,
And all from life did peacefully depart,
Contrite, forgiving, and by Him forgiven,
To look on whom such longing yearns our heart."
"None do I recognize," I answered, "even
Scanning your faces with mine utmost art;
But whatsoe'er, ye sacred souls, I may
To give you comfort, speak, and I will do;

Yea, by that peace which leads me on my way
From world to world such guidance to pursue."

"Without such protestation," one replied,
"Unless thy will a want of power defeat,
In thy kind offices we all confide;
Whence I, sole speaking before these, entreat
If thou mayst e'er the territory see
That lies betwixt Romagna and the seat
Where Charles hath sway, that thou so courteous be
As to implore the men in Fano's town
To put up prayers there earnestly for me,
That I may purge the sins that weigh me down.
There I was born; but those deep wounds of mine
Through which my life-blood issued I received
Among the children of Antènor's line,
Where most secure my person I believed;
'T was through that lord of Este I was sped
Who, past all justice, had me in his hate.
O'ertak'n at Oriaco, had I fled
Towards Mira, still where breath is I might wait.
But to the marsh I made my way instead,
And there, entangled in the cany brake
And mire, I fell, and on the ground saw spread,
From mine own veins outpoured, a living lake."

Here spake another: "Oh, may that desire
So be fulfilled which to the lofty mount

Conducts thy feet, as thou shalt bring me nigher
To mine by thy good prayers. I am the Count
Buonconte; Montefeltro's lord was I.
Giovanna cares not; no one cares for me:
Therefore with these I go dejectedly."
And I to him: "What violence took thee,
Or chance of war, from Campaldino then
So far that none e'er knew thy burial-place?"
"Oh!" answered he, "above the hermit's glen
A stream whose course is Casentino's base
Springs in the Apennine, Archiano called.
There, where that name is lost in Arno's flood,
Exhausted I arrived, footsore and galled,
Pierced in my throat, painting the plain with blood.
Here my sight failed me, and I fell; the last
Word that I spake was Mary's name, and then
From my deserted flesh the spirit passed.
The truth I tell now, tell to living men!
God's angel took me, but that fiend of Hell
Screamed out: 'Ha! thou from Heaven, why
robb'st thou me?
His soul thou gett'st for one small tear that fell,
But of this offal other work I 'll see.'
Thou know'st how vapors, gathering in the air,
Mount to the cold, and there, condensed, distill
Back into water. That Bad Will which ne'er
Seeks aught but evil joined his evil will
With intellect, and, from the great force given

By his fell nature, moved the mist and wind,
And o'er the valley drew the darkened heaven,
Covering it with clouds as day declined
From Pratomagno far as the great chain,
So that the o'erburdened air to water turned;
Then the floods fell, and every rivulet's vein
Swelled with the superflux the soaked earth spurned.
When to large streams the mingling torrents grew,
Down to the royal river with such force
They rushed that no restraint their fury knew.
Here fierce Archiano found my frozen corse
Stretched at its mouth, and into Arno's wave
Dashed it, and loosened from my breast the sign
(Which when mine anguish mastered me I gave)
Of holy cross with my crossed arms: in fine,
O'er bed and bank my form the streamlet drave
Whirling, and with its own clay covered mine."

"Oh, stay! when thou shalt walk the world once more,
And have repose from that long way of thine,"
Said the third spirit, following those before,
"Remember Pia! for that name was mine.
Sienna gave me birth; Maremma's fen
Was my undoing: he knows that full well
Who ringed my finger with his gem, and then,
After espousal, took me there to dwell."

CANTO THE SIXTH.

When from the game of hazard men depart,
The loser stays, and, casting o'er his throws,
Learns a hard lesson with a heavy heart,
While with the winner all the assembly goes:
One runs before, one plucks his robe behind;
But he delays not, though beside his way
Another comrade calls himself to mind;
And every one perceives that he would say,
"*Press me no more!*" to whom he lifts his
hand,
And by so doing keeps the crowd at bay;
Such I was, freeing me from that dense band,
To this and that one bending my survey,
And promising to answer each demand.

Here was that Aretine whose lethal wound
The savage hands of Ghin' di Tacco made;
Also that knight who in pursuit was drowned.
Here with stretched palms Frederic Novello prayed;
The Pisan, too, at whose defeat his sire,
Good old Marzucco, showed a strength sublime.
I saw Count Orso, and that soul whom dire
Envy and spite, but no committed crime,
Tore from his mortal frame, as he declared;
Pierre de la Brosse I mean: so, while she may,

Be that bad woman of Brabant prepared,
Lest she go join a far worse flock than they!

When I had freed me from the gathering press
Of shadows praying still that others' prayers
Might hasten forward their own blessedness,
I thus began: "Thy page, my Light! declares
Expressly, in one text, that Heaven's decree
To no beseeching bendeth. Yet this race
Prays with such purpose: will their praying be
Without avail? or have I in that place
Misread thy word?" He answered: "It is gross
And plain to reason: no fallacious hope
Is theirs, if thy sound mind consider close.
The topmost height of judgment doth not slope,
Because love's fire may instantly complete
The penance due from one of these; but where
I closed that point with words which you repeat,
A gulf betwixt the Most High was and prayer:
No praying there could cover past defect.
Yet verily, in so profound a doubt
Rest not, till she who 'twixt thine intellect
And truth shall be thy light herself speak out.
Dost understand me? Beatrice I mean.
Thou shalt behold her in a loftier place,
This mountain summit, smiling and serene."
"Good Guide," said I, "then let us mend our pace;
I feel no more my weariness: o'er us

The mountain shadow grows, and hides mine ow[illegible]
"We will go forward," he gave answer thus,
"Far as we can, ere this day's light be gone;
But thy thought wanders from the fact. Th[illegible]t
height
Ere thou canst gain, thou shalt behold the day's
Returning orb, who now so hides his light
Behind the hill that thou break'st not his rays.
But, yonder, look! one spirit all alone,
By itself stationed, bends toward us his gaze:
The readiest passage will by him be shown."

We came up towards it. O proud Lombard sou[illegible]!
How thou didst wait, in thy disdain unstirred,
And thy majestic eyes didst slowly roll!
Meanwhile, to us it never uttered word,
But let us move, just giving us a glance,
Like as a lion looks in his repose.
Then Virgil, making a more near advance,
Prayed him to show us where the mountain rose
With easier slope; and still that soul replied
Nothing to his demand, but question made
About life and our country. My sweet Guide
Began to answer, "Mantua," and the shade
From where it had been, separate from his band,
All rapt in self, sprang up towards him in haste,
Saying: "O Mantuan, I am of thy land!
I am Sordello." And the twain embraced.

Ah, slavish Italy! thou common inn
For woe to lodge at! without pilot, thou
Ship in great tempest! not what thou hast been,
Lady of provinces, but brothel now!
That gentle soul so quickly, at the dear
Sound that recalled his country, forward came
To grace his townsman with a greeting here;
And now thy living children, to their shame,
Are all at war, and they who dwell most near
Prey, each on each, with moat and wall the same!
Search, wretched! search all round thine either coast,
And then look inland in thy bosom; see
If peace in any part of thee thou know'st!
What though Justinian made new reins for thee?
What boots it if the saddle remain void?
Without his mending thy disgrace were less.
And O ye tribe that ought to be employed
In your devotions, and let Cæsar press
The seat of Cæsar, if God's word you heed!
See, since your hand hath on the bridle been,
How wanton grown and wicked is the steed,
Through want from you of the spur's discipline.
O German Albert! who abandonest
Her now run wild, unchecked by curb of thine,
When thou shouldst ride her with thy heels hard-pressed,
May Heaven's just judgment light upon thy line!

And be it something strange and manifest,
To make him tremble that comes after thee;
Because, for lust of barren fiefs out there,
Thou and thy father have not shamed to see
The empire's garden desolate and bare.
Come see the Capulets and Montagues,
Monaldi, Filippeschi, O thou being
Without concern! these wan with fears, and those
Already crushed: come sate thyself with seeing,
Thou cruel man, the outrage that is done
To thy best blood, and make their bruises well!
And thou shalt see likewise, cold looker-on,
Santafiore's lords, how safe they dwell.
Come see thy Rome, that, mourning all alone,
Weepeth, a widow, calling day and night:
"Why, O my Cæsar, dost thou leave thine own?"
Come see what love there, how all hearts unite!
And if no pity move thee at our moan,
Blush for thy fame, beholding such a sight.
And, lawful if I speak, O most high Jove,
Who wast for our sakes crucified on earth!
Are Thy just eyes, who watchest men above,
Turned elsewhere? Or is this, before the birth
Of some great good, a preparation hid
From us in the abyss of thy intent,
That all the Italian towns are tyrant-rid,
And every clown that comes on faction bent
Makes as much clamor as Marcellus did?

My Florence! well mayst thou remain content
At this digression; it concerns not thee,
Thanks to thy people, great in argument!
Many with justice in their hearts there be
Who stay the shaft, lest, coming to the bow
Without discretion, it might err; but they
On their lips wear it. Many men are slow
To serve the state, and turn from place away;
Thy people do not! every one bends low,
Crying before he 's called for, "I obey."
Now make thee joyful, who mayst triumph well;
Thou who art rich, so wise, and so at peace!
If I speak true in this, let the truth tell.
Athens and Sparta, that raised civil Greece
To such a height, and framed the ancient laws,
Towards the well-ordered life made small beginning
Compared with thee, whose legislation draws
Threads out so fine that thine October spinning
Comes before mid-November to a pause.
How many times hast thou renewed thy men,
Yea, within days that in thy memory dwell,
And changed thy laws and offices, and then
Customs and coins! If thou remember well,
Thou wilt behold thyself (unless quite blind),
Like a sick woman, restless, that in vain
Seeks on her pillow some repose to find,
And turns and turns, as 't were to parry pain.

CANTO THE SEVENTH.

THREE times and four these greetings glad and free
Had been repeated, when Sordello's shade
Drew from embrace, and said: "Now, who are ye?"
And thereupon my Guide this answer made:
"Ere to this mountain those just souls, to whom
Heavenward to climb was given, had guided been,
My bones Octavian gathered to the tomb.
Virgil I am, and for none other sin
But want of faith was I from Heaven shut out."
Like one who suddenly before him sees
Something that wakes his wonder, whence, in doubt,
He says, "*It is not;*" then, believing, "*'Tis!*"
Sordello stood; then back to him, without
Lifting his eyelids, turned and clasped his knees.
"O glory of the Latin race!" he cried,
"Through whom to such a height our language rose;
O of my birthplace everlasting pride!
What merit or grace on me thy sight bestows,
Tell me, unless to hear thee is denied;
Com'st thou from Hell, or where hast thou repose?"

He to this answered: "Grace from Heaven moved me,
And leads me still; the circles every one
Of sorrow's kingdom have I trod to thee.

My sight is barred from that supernal sun
(Whom I knew late, and thou desir'st to see),
Not for I did, but for I left undone.
A place below there is, where no groans rise
From torment, sad alone with want of light,
Where the lament sounds not like moan, but sighs.
The little innocents whom death's fell bite
Snatched, ere their stain was purified, are there:
And there I dwell with guiltless ones that still
The three most holy virtues did not wear,
Though all the rest they knew, and did fulfil.
But if thou knowest, and mayst us apprise,
Tell us how we most speedily may find
Where Purgatory's actual entrance lies."

"We have," he answered, "no set place assigned;
Around and upward I am free to stray:
My guidance, far as I may go, I lend.
But see how fast already fails the day!
And in the night none ever can ascend:
Best, then, we think of some good resting-place.
Some souls there be, removed here to the right,
Whom, if thou wilt, I 'll show thee face to face,
And thou shalt know them not without delight."
"How, then," said Virgil, "should a soul aspire
To climb by night, would other check be found,
Or his own weakness hinder his desire?"
And good Sordello drew along the ground

His finger, saying: "Look! not even this line
Mayst thou pass over when the sun hath gone.
Not that aught else, though, would thy power confine,
Save want of light, from journeying upwards on:
Darkness makes impotent thy will. By night
One may go back again, and grope below,
And, while the horizon shuts the day from sight,
Wander about the hillside to and fro."
My Master then, as 't were in wonder, spake:
"Now lead us thitherward where thou hast said
That we in lingering shall such pleasure take."
Nor had we forward far advanced our tread,
When I perceived that on the mountain-side
A valley opened, just like valleys here.
"We will go forward," said our shadowy guide,
"Where on the slope yon hollow doth appear;
There let us wait the dawning of the day."
'Twixt steep and level went a winding path
Which led us where the vale-side dies away,
Till less than half its height the margin hath.

Gold and fine silver, ceruse, cochineal,
India's rich wood, heaven's lucid blue serene,
Or glow that emeralds freshly-broke reveal,
Had all been vanquished by the varied sheen
Of this bright valley set with shrubs and flowers,
As less by greater. Nor had Nature there
Only in painting spent herself, but showers

Of odors manifold made sweet the air,
With one strange mingling of confused perfume;
And there new spirits, chanting, I descried,
"*Salve Regina!*" seated on the bloom
And verdure sheltered by the dingle side.

"Ere yon low sun shall nestle in his bed,"
Began the Mantuan who had brought us here,
"Desire not down among them to be led;
You better will observe how they appear,
Both face and action, from this bank, instead
Of mixing with them in the dale. That one
Who sits the highest, looking, 'mid the throng,
As though some duty he had left undone,
Who moves his lips not with the rest in song,
Was Rodolph Emperor; he who might have healed
Those wounds which Italy have so far spent
That slow relief all other helpers yield.
The other, that on soothing him seems bent,
Once ruled the region whence those waters are
Which Moldau bears to Elbe, and Elbe the sea.
His name was Ottocar; and better far,
Yea, in his very swaddling-robe, was he
Than Vincislaüs, his big-bearded son,
Whom luxury and ease have made so gross.
And he of slender nose, who, with the one
So bland of aspect, seems in consult close,
Died flying, and in dust his lilies laid.

Look! how he beats the breast he cannot calm.
Mark too his mate there, sighing, who hath made
For his pale cheek a pillow of his palm;
One is the father of that pest of France,
Father-in-law the other: well they know
His lewd, base life! This misery is the lance
That to the core cuts either of them so.
And he so stout of limb, in unison
Singing with him there of the manly nose,
Of every virtue put the girdle on;
And if that youth behind him, in repose,
Had, after him, reigned in his father's stead,
Virtue from vase to vase had been well poured,
Which of the other heirs may not be said.
Frederic and James now o'er those kingdoms lord,
In whom that better heritage lies dead.
Rarely doth human goodness rise again
Through the tree's branches: He hath willed it so
Who gives this boon of excellence, that men
Should ask of Him who can alone bestow.
Not more these words of mine at Peter glance
Than him he sings with (of the large nose there),
Whose loss Apulia mourneth, and Provence,
So ill the tree doth with its stock compare!
Even so much more of her good lord his wife
Constance yet vaunts herself, than Margaret may,
Or Beatrice. That king of simplest life,
Harry of England, seated there, survey

All by himself: his branches are more blest!
The one who sits there with uplifted gaze
Among the group, but lower than the rest,
Is Marquis William, in whose cause the frays
Of Alexandria have with grief oppressed
Both Monferrato and the Canavese."

CANTO THE EIGHTH.

'T WAS now the hour that brings to men at sea,
Who in the morn have bid sweet friends farewell,
Fond thoughts and longing back with them to be;
And thrills the pilgrim with a tender spell
Of love, if haply, new upon his way,
He faintly hear a chime from some far bell,
That seems to mourn the dying of the day;
When I forbore my listening faculty
To mark one spirit uprisen amid the band
Who joined both palms and lifted them on high,
(First having claimed attention with his hand),
And towards the orient bent so fixed an eye
As 't were he said: "*My God! on thee alone*
My longing rests." Then from his lips there came
Te lucis ante, so devout of tone,
So sweet, my mind was ravished by the same.
The others next, full sweetly and devout,
Fixing their gaze on the supernal wheels,
Followed him, chanting the whole psalm throughout.

Now, reader, to the truth my verse conceals
Make sharp thy vision; subtle is the veil
So fine 't were easily passed through unseen.
I saw that gentle army meek and pale,
Silently gazing upward with a mien
As of expectancy; and from on high
Beheld two angels with two swords descend
Which flamed with fire, but, as I could descry,
They bare no points, being broken at the end.
Green robes, in hue more delicate than spring's
Tender new leaves, they trailed behind, and fanned
With gentle beating of their verdant wings.
One, coming near, just over us took stand;
Down to th' opponent bank the other sped,
So that the spirits were between them grouped.
Full well could I discern each flaxen head;
But in their faces mine eyes' virtue drooped,
As 't were confounded by excess and dread.
"From Mary's bosom they have both come here,"
Sordello said, "this valley to protect
Against the serpent that will soon appear:"
Whence I, unknowing which way to expect
This object, turned me almost froze with fear,
And to those trusty shoulders closely clung.
Again Sordello: "Go we down and see
These mighty shades, and let them hear our tongue.
Thy presence will to them right gracious be."
Only three steps I think brought me below

Where one I noticed, solely eying me,
As if who I might be he fain would know.

'T was dusk, yet not so but the dusky air
Between his eyes and mine, within the dell,
Showed what before it did not quite declare.
Towards me he moved, and I towards him as well:
Gentle Judge Nino, when I saw thee there
What joy was mine to find thee not in Hell!
We left unsaid no form of fair salute:
Then he inquired: "How long since thou didst come
O'er the far waters to the mountain's foot?"
"Oh, but this morn," said I, "the realms of gloom
I passed: in the first life I am, but fain
Would find the next, by following on this track."
Like to men suddenly amazed, the twain,
He and Sordello, hearing this, drew back.
One looked at Virgil, one into the face
Of a companion sitting there, and cried,
"Up, Conrad! see what God hath of His grace
Bestowed," then turning unto me replied:
"By that especial reverence, I beseech,
Which thou ow'st Him whose primal way is hid
So that none sound it! if soe'er thou reach
The shore beyond the vasty waters, bid
My child Giovanna for my peace implore
There where the cry of innocents heaven heeds.

Her mother, I am sure, loves me no more
Since she put off her widow's paly weeds,
But, in her misery, fain would wear this day.
From her full readily may one be taught
How soon love's flame in woman dies away,
If sight or touch full oft relume it not.
The chanticleer upon Gallura's shield
Had graced her sepulchre with fairer show
Than will that viper, which to battlefield
Marshals the men of Milan." With such glow
He uttered this, as in his face revealed
The heart's just passion smouldering yet below.

Still that sole part of heaven I fondly eyed
Where the stars move, even as a wheel doth move
More slowly next the axle. Said my Guide:
"Son, what dost thou so gaze at there above?"
"Up there at yon three torches!" I replied,
"Whose splendor makes this pole here all ablaze."
And he to me: "The four clear stars that rose
This morn before thee, have abased their rays,
And these have mounted in the place of those."
While thus he spake, Sordello to his side
Drew Virgil, and exclaimed: "Behold our foe!"
And pointed to the thing which he descried:
And where that small vale's barrier sinks most low,
A serpent suddenly was seen to glide,
Such as gave Eve, perchance, the fruit of woe.

Through flowers and herbage came that evil streak,
To lick its back oft turning round its head,
As with his tongue a beast his fur doth sleek.
I was not looking, so must leave unsaid
When first they fluttered, but full well I saw
Both heavenly falcons had their plumage spread.
Soon as the serpent felt the withering flaw
Of those green wings, it vanished; and they sped
Up to their posts again, with even flight.
The shade who had approached the judge when he
Accosted him, had never moved his sight
Through this encounter, looking fixed on me.

"So may that light," the spirit began to say,
"Which leads thee up, find in thine own free will
Sufficient wax to last thee all the way,
Even to th' enamelled summit of the hill!
If thou true news of Val di Magra know'st,
Or of those parts, inform me of the same;
For I was mighty once upon that coast,
And Conrad Malaspina was my name.
Not the old lord, but his descendant, I:
The love which once I to my kindred bore
Is here refined." "Oh," thus I made reply,
"That realm of yours I never travelled o'er;
But where throughout all Europe is the place
That knows it not? The honor fame accords
Your house illustrates not alone the race,

But makes the land renowned as are its lords.
He knows that country who was never there;
Still the free purse they bear, and still bright
swords:
So mount my soul, as this to thee I swear!
Custom and nature privilege them so,
That if through guilt the world's guide lead astray,
They in the path of right straightforward go
Sole of all men, and scorn the evil way!"
To these my words, "Now go," the spirit said,
"For the sun shall not enter seven times more
That part of heaven where Aries o'er his bed
Stretches and spreads his forkèd feet all four,
Ere this thy courtesy's belief shall be
Nailed in the middle of thy head with nails
Of greater force than men's reports to thee,
If, unimpeded, Judgment's course prevails."

CANTO THE NINTH.

FORTH from the arms of her belovèd now,
Whitening the orient steep, the concubine
Of old Tithonus came, her lucent brow
Adorned with gems whose figure formed the sign
Of that cold animal whose tail with dread
Strikes trembling nations; and the night, where we
Now were, had made of her ascending tread

Two of her paces and was making three,
With wings through weariness less fully spread,
When I, in whom the weakness was alive
Of Adam's nature, sank in slumber's power,
Where sat already on the grass all five.

Near to the dawning, and about the hour
When first the little swallow wakes her lays,
Mayhap remembering her old woes afresh;
And when our mind, relieved of thinking, strays
More of a pilgrim from its cage of flesh,
Till to its vision 't is almost divine;
Dreaming, I seemed to see in heaven suspended
An eagle that with golden plumes did shine
And with spread wings, as he to swoop intended:
And in that place it seemed to be, methought,
Where Ganymede, abandoning his own,
Was up to heaven's high consistory caught.
Then I considered: haply here alone
His wont to strike is, and he scorns elsewhere
To bear up what he snatches in his feet.
Methought he next wheeled somewhat in the air,
Then struck like lightning, terrible and fleet,
And rapt me up to the empyrean: there
We burned together in so fierce a heat,
And such of that imagined fire the smart,
My dream perforce was by the scorching broke.
Not otherwise Achilles with a start

Rolled his amazed eyes round him, newly-woke,
And knowing nothing where he was, when flying
His mother bore him slumbering on her breast,
From Chiron to the isle of Scyros hieing,
Whence the Greeks, after, forced him with the rest,
Than I too started! so that all repose
Fled from my features; deadly pale and chill
I grew, like one whom fear hath well-nigh froze.
Sole stood my Comforter beside me still;
My face was towards the sea-shore turned; the sun
Was risen already more than two hours high.
"Fear not," my Lord said, "we have well begun:
Shrink not! but every way enlarge thy strength;
Thou hast arrived at Purgatory! See
Yon cliff that circles it; behold at length
The entrance, parted where it seems to be.

"In the white light that comes before the morn
While slumbering in thee lay thy soul, there came
Over the flowers this valley that adorn,
A woman, saying: 'Lucia is my name;
This man here sleeping let me take in care,
So shall I speed him forward on his way.'
Sordello, with his gentle comrades there,
Remained: she took thee, and at dawn of day
Up hither sped, and I behind her straight.
Here she reposed thee; first with her fair eyes

Showing the aperture of yonder gate,
Then vanished, and thy sleep in even wise."
As a man, doubting, comforteth his fear
At truth's discovery, confident once more,
So did I change; and seeing me appear
Without inquietude, my Guide up o'er
The cliff moved on, I following in his rear.
Reader, thou well observ'st to what a height
I lift my matter, therefore wonder not
If with more art I strengthen what I write!
We still approached, and now had reached the spot
Where that which first had seemed to me a rent
Like to a fissure in a wall, my view
Made out a gate, and leading to it went
Three steps, and each was of a different hue:
A guardian sat there keeping the ascent.
As yet he spake not, and as more and more
Mine eyes I opened, on the topmost stair
I saw him sitting, and the look he wore
Was of such brightness that I could not bear.
The rays were so reflected from his face
By a drawn sword that glistened in his hand,
That oft I turned to look in empty space.

Then he began: "Speak ye from where ye stand!
What seek ye here? who leads you to this place?
Take heed lest climbing upward from the strand
You come to harm!" My Master answered thus:

"A heavenly lady of such things aware,
Spake in these words not long ago to us:
'Go ye up yonder, for the gate is there.'"
"And may she speed you on your way to good!"
Rejoined that gracious guard. "Up to our flight
Advance you then!" We therefore came and stood
At the first stair, which was of marble white,
So clear and burnished, that therein I could
Behold myself, how I appear to sight.
The second was a rough stone, burnt and black
Beyond the darkest purple; through its length
And crosswise, it was traversed by a crack.
The third, whose mass is rested on their strength,
Appeared to me of porphyry, flaming red,
Or like blood spouting from a vein; thereon
God's angel kept with planted feet his tread,
Sitting upon the threshold's gleaming stone,
Which seemed to me of adamant. My Guide
Led me, with my good will, up that ascent,
Saying: "Beg humbly that the bolt may slide!"
And at those hallowed feet devout I bent:
"In mercy open to me!" I implored,
But first I smote me thrice upon my breast.
He on my forehead with his pointed sword
Traced *P* seven times, then spake me this behest:
"Wash thou these wounds when thou hast passed the door."

Ashes or dry heaps dug from gravelly earth
Were of one color with the robe he wore,
From under which two keys he next drew forth.
One was of gold, one silver; first he plied
The white, then used the yellow on the gate,
In such sort as my spirit satisfied;
Then said: "To none is passable the strait
When either of these keys be vainly tried,
And in the wards without response it grate.
One is more precious, one more asketh wise
Counsel and intellect the lock to free,
Because 't is this which error's knot unties.
From Peter's hand I hold them. He on me
Enjoined this rule, that I should rather err
In opening unto penitents, than be
Slow to unbind, if at my feet they were."

Then of that pass he pushed the sacred gate,
Saying: "Go in; but be ye warned, before
You enter! who looks back returneth straight."
And when the hinge-bolts of the holy door,
Which are of strong and sounding metal, rolled
Round in their sockets, the Tarpeian rock,
When robbed of good Metellus and its gold,
Rung not so loud, nor yielded such a shock.
At the first thunder, as the portal swung,
I looked about, and as I stood intent
Heard *Te Deum laudamus!* clearly sung;

And the gate's music with the song was blent.
The same impression what I heard gave me
As on the listener's hearing is begot
When men with organs join their voice, and we
Now hear the words, and now we hear them not.

CANTO THE TENTH.

WHEN we had crossed the threshold of the gate
Which from the bad love sets the spirits free
(Bad, for it makes the crooked way seem straight),
I heard it closed: had I turned round to see,
What fit excuse had been for fault so great?
We climbed up through the cloven rock whose face
Went in and out like waves that come and go.
"Here must a little art direct our pace,"
My Guide began, "in winding onward so
As where the crag recedeth to find place."
This made our footsteps few and passage slow;
And ere that needle's eye we had passed through,
The waning moon had sunk again to rest;
But when free forth we had an open view
Up where no fissure mars the mountain's breast
(I wearied out, both doubtful of our path),
We stopped upon the level of a ledge
Lonelier than roads through deserts. This plain
hath

From the steep hillside to its outer edge,
That borders on void space, a breadth as wide
As thrice the measure of a human frame:
Right hand and left, far as mine eye descried,
This cornice in its breadth appeared the same.
Thereon our feet along the mountain-side
Had not advanced a step before I found
Ascent impossible: it was a shelf
Walled with white marble and so sculptured round
That Polycrete, yea, nature's very self,
Had there been shamed. There, lighted on the ground,
The angel stood who brought down the decree
Of that dear peace which men had wept for long,
And heaven from its old interdict set free,
So truly cut that it had seemed a wrong
To think that sweet look but a silent stone:
One would have sworn that it said "*Ave!*" She
Was also imaged there, the blessèd one
Who to the Love Divine did turn the key.
And in her act distinctly was revealed
This word: "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord!*"
Plain as a figure that in wax is sealed.
"Let not thy mind one only place record,"
Said my sweet Master, who upon that side
Where men their heart have, still was keeping me.
Therefore I turned my visage and espied
Behind the Mary, and beyond where he

Was standing at whose word I turned mine eye,
Another story carved upon the stone;
So I came near it, passing Virgil by,
To where the figure might be plainly shown.
In the same marble there was graved the car
And oxen carrying the sacred ark,
Whence men should of officiousness beware!
In front the people all, as I could mark,
Ranged in seven choirs. While one sense told me *No*,
The other said: *Yes, I perceive they sing.*
And in like manner at the imaged flow
Of curling incense did a discord spring,
Betwixt my sight and smell, of yes and no.
Before that blessèd vessel there was seen
The Psalmist dancing, humbled of his state,
And, more than king, seemed less than king in mien.
Over against him, gazing from the grate
Of a proud palace, like a woman vext
Looking disdainful, Michal's figure shone.
I moved my place to mark what story next
Gleamed behind Michal whitely from the stone.
Here graven the lofty glory I admired
Of that high Roman prince whose virtues meek
To his great victory Gregory inspired:
Trajan the emperor, of him I speak;
And a poor widow full of grief, all tears,

Trembled beside him at his bridle's head.
The place looked trampled, thronged with cavaliers;
The golden eagles over him outspread
Moved in the wind; and she amid the train,
That wretched woman, looked as though she said:
'*My lord! revenge my grief, my sweet son slain!*"
He seemed as answering: "*My return abide.*"
"*My lord,*" like one whose wrong brooks no delay,
"*If thou return not?*" seemed as she replied.
And he: "*The one succeeding to my throne*
Will do thee right." "*What profit unto thee*
His doing well, if thou forget thine own?"
Whereto in this form seemed as answering he:
"*Now comfort thee! this duty I will end*
Ere I go hence. Pity doth plead with me
To stay, and Justice wills that I attend."
He unto whom naught can be new or strange
Made visible this language I have penned,
Novel to us, because beyond our range.
While on these figures with delight I pored,
Which of such lowliness the story told,
And for their Sculptor's sake the more adored,
The Poet murmured in mine ear: "Behold!
This way a crowd seems creeping: they might guide
Our footsteps to the cornices above."
Mine eyes, that had been wholly satisfied

With those new things to look on which they love,
At these words were not slow to turn aside.

Reader, I would not have thee shrink dismayed
From thy good purpose, hearing of the doom
By which God wills our penance must be paid.
Heed not its form: think on what is to come!
At worst, consider, it could not endure
Beyond the Judgment. "Master," I began,
"My sight so fails me that I am not sure
What shapes are coming; they seem unlike man."
"Their torment's heaviness so doth crush them down,"
He answered me, "that even to my sight
Their shape at first was indistinctly shown.
But fix thy gaze, to disentangle quite
What creatures come, under those loads of stone.
Now mayst thou mark the pangs of every wight."
O ye proud Christians, weary, woebegone!
Who with a mental vision most infirm
Go confident with steps that go not on!
Perceive ye not that man is but a worm,
Born to produce the angelic butterfly
That with no screening shall to Justice fleet?
For what should human spirit mount so high?
Ye are as wingèd creatures, incomplete,
Even as the worm is, not formed perfectly.

As in the bracket's place one often sees
Figures by which the ceiling is sustained,
Crouching, with bosom doubled to the knees,
Whence unfeigned pity for a posture feigned
Moves the beholder's mind; so bending, these
Figures appeared as I perused them o'er.
They came, in truth, contracted more and less
According to the burden each one bore:
And he whose face most patience did express
Seemed to say, weeping: "*I can bear no more!*"

CANTO THE ELEVENTH.

"O THOU, our Father, dwelling there in heaven!
Not circumscribed, save by the larger love
Which to thy love's first offspring must be given,
Who from the first have dwelt with thee above!
By every creature hallowed be thy name
And praised thy goodness, as for man was meant
To render thanks to thy benignant flame:
May to our souls thy kingdom's peace be lent,
For of ourselves we could not come thereto
With all our intellect, unless 't were sent:
And even as of their will thine angels do
Chanting *Hosanna* sacrifice to thee,
So to thy will may men their own subdue:
Our daily manna give to us this day,

Without which help, through this rough wilderness,
Who strives to go falls backward on his way.
And even as we forbear us to redress
The wrong from others which we have to brook,
Pardon thou us, benignant One! and less
On our deserving than our weakness look:
Try not our virtue, ever prone to yield,
'Gainst the old enemy who spurs it so;
Deliver us from him and be our shield:
This last petition, dearest Lord! we know
We have no need of; but for them we plead
Who after us amid temptation go."

Thus praying for themselves and us God-speed,
Those weary shadows, underneath a load
Like that we sometimes dream that we endure,
Toiled in unequal anguish o'er the road
Round the first cornice, all becoming pure
From the world's tarnish. Oh, if alway there
For us they say such gracious words, for them
What might be here performed in act or prayer
By souls whose will is a sound-rooted stem!
Well might we help them wash whatever stain
They bore hence, that at last, sublimed and fair,
They to the starry circles might attain.

"Ah, so may pity soon, and justice, spare
You souls this load, that you may move the wing

That lifts you upward to celestial air!
Show us which way most speedily may bring
Us towards the ascent. If more than one there be,
Point us that pass the least precipitous;
Since he who comes and fain would climb with me
Through flesh of Adam is encumbered thus."
Who made their answer to these words which he
Whom I was following unto them addrest
Was not discernible, but this was said:
"To the right hand, along the bank, 't is best
You come with us. This way, to living tread,
The pass is possible that you request:
And were I not impeded by the stone
Which my proud neck so masters with its weight,
That I perforce must hold my visage down,
This man who liveth, and who doth not state
What name he bears, I would look up to see
If I do know, and make compassionate
His heart, for this huge load that bendeth me.
William Aldobrandeschi was the name
Of a great Tuscan; I was born his son,
Of Latin race: whether his title came
To your ears ever, knowledge have I none.
Mine ancestors, their ancient blood and what
They wrought by prowess, rendered me so high
In arrogance, that never taking thought
About our common mother, all men I
So scorned, that as the Siennese all know,

I to my death was verily brought thereby;
And every child in Campagnatico
Knows how I there did perish for my sin.
I am Omberto, and not me alone
Hath pride done damage to, but all my kin.
Them it dragged hither with myself to groan,
And I who, living, never bowed my head,
Till God be satisfied, and mercy shown,
Must bear this burden here among the dead."

Listening, I held my visage down intent;
And one of them, but not the same that spoke,
Writhing, looked up, beneath his burden bent,
And recognized, and called me; still his look
With strained eyes fixing upon me who went
All bowed beside them. "Oh," exclaimed I then,
"Art thou not Oderisi, Gubbio's pride,
And honor also of that art which men
In Paris name illuming?" He replied:
"Brother! those leaves with hues more smiling shine
Touched by the pencil of the Bolognese,
Franco, whose whole fame was but partly mine.
Haply in life such courteous words as these
I had not spoken, so my heart was set
All others to excel. For such poor pride
Here I must pay the penalty; nor yet
Should I be here, but that before I died

I turned to God, still having power to sin.
O thou vain-glory of man's boasted powers!
How little while thy summit keeps its green,
Unless gross ages come that yield no flowers!
Once Cimabuè thought to keep the crown
In painting's field; now all cry Giotto best,
So that the former hath but dim renown:
Thus could one Guido from the other wrest
The glory of language, and perchance is born
He that shall drive out either from his nest.
Naught is the world's voice but a breath of morn
Coming this way and that, and changing name
Even as it shifteth side: what more shalt thou,
If old thou cast thy flesh, enjoy of fame,
Than if death's hand had touched thy baby brow
Whilst thou wert babbling, ere a thousand years
Have past? which unto God's eternity
A space more insignificant appears
Than would the twinkle of an eyelid be
To the least rapid of the heavenly spheres.
Yon soul before me moving on so slow,
Once through all Tuscany was noised for great;
Now scarce Sienna breathes his name, although
He was her sovereign, when the infuriate
Spirit of Florence met such overthrow;
For she, now vile, swelled them in proud estate.
Men's reputation is the fleeting hue
Of grass, that comes and goes! even that whereby

Fresh from the soil its tender verdure grew,
The sun, discolors it and leaveth dry."

And I: "Thy truthful words teach me to seek
Goodness in humbleness, and quell my pride.
But who is he of whom thou just didst speak?"
"That 's Provenzan Salvani," he replied;
"And he goes here because he so presumed
In bringing all Sienna 'neath his sway:
Thus ever since he died hath he been doomed,
Without repose, to walk his weary way.
Who dares too much there, in such coin pays back."
I then: "If every soul who doth delay
Repentance till the limit of life's track,
Must wait below, nor be up here received
Unless good prayers assist him on his road,
Before as much time pass as he hath lived,
How comes this largess upon him bestowed?"

The spirit replied: "When he was living still
In the full glory of his most high state,
All shame subduing, of his own free will
Amid Sienna's public square he sate,
And there, his friend to ransom from the pain
Which Charles had doomed him, of his dungeon's grate,
Did that which made him tremble in each vein.
I say no more, and know I darkly teach:

But in short while thy neighbors unto thee
Will so conduct, that thou mayst gloss my speech.
Him from those confines did this act set free."

CANTO THE TWELFTH.

PAIRED, like two oxen treading under yoke,
That burdened soul and I as far had gone
As the loved Tutor let. But when he spoke
These words: "Now leave him! We must travel on,
For here 't is good with spread of sail and stroke
Of oar, to push his boat as each best may,"
I made myself, as walking needs, erect,
But only in body; just it is to say
My thoughts were bowed, my spirit was deject.
Still, I was moving, and with willing feet
Followed my Master; both began to show
How light we were, when thus he said: "'T is meet
That, walking here, thou bend thine eyes below,
So to observe, and make the moments fleet,
Over what kind of bed thy footsteps go."

Even as, that so their memory may survive,
Our earthly tombs, above the buried, bear
The graven form of what they were alive;
(Whence oft one weeps afresh the image there,

Pricked by remembrance, which doth only give
To souls compassionate a sting of pain),
So I saw figured o'er, but with more skill
In the resemblance, all the narrow plain
Which formed our pathway, jutting from the hill.

Him there I marked, on one side, noblest made
Of all God's creatures, stricken down from heaven
Like lightning! Opposite, there was displayed
Briareus, cast from where he late had striven,
Smit by celestial thunderbolts, and laid
Heavy on earth, and in the frost of death.
I saw Thymbræus, Pallas too, and Mars,
Still armed, around their sire, with bated breath
Viewing the giants, their torn limbs and scars!
Nimrod I saw, at foot of his great tower,
As if bewildered, gazing on the tribes
That showed with him such haughtiness of power
In Shinar's plain, as Genesis describes.
O Niobe! with what eyes, full of woe,
'Mid thy slain children, upon each hand seven,
I saw thee carved upon the road! And O
Saul in Gilboa! that no more from heaven
Felt rain or dew, how dead on thine own sword
Didst thou appear! Thee, mad Arachne, there
I saw, half-spider, fumbling the deplored
Shreds of that work which wrought for thee
spair.

Ah, Rehoboam! there no more in threat
Stands thy fierce figure; smit with fear he flies,
Whirled in a chariot, none pursuing yet.
Showed also that hard pavement to mine eyes
How young Alcmæon made his mother sell
With life the luckless ornament she wore.
How, in the temple, on Sennacherib fell
The sons, and left his corpse there on the floor.
The cruel carnage and the wreck it showed
Which Tomyris made, when she to Cyrus cried:
"Blood thou didst thirst for! now I give thee blood;"
And showed th' Assyrians flying far and wide
In utter rout, with Holofernes dead,
And all the slaughter that befell beside,
And the grim carcase by the bloody bed.
Troy next I saw, an ashy caverned waste:
O Ilion! how vile the work showed thee
Which there is graven, how utterly abased!
What master of pencil or of stile was he
Who so those traits and figures could have traced
That subtlest wit had been amazed thereby?
Alive the living seemed, and dead the dead!
Who saw the truth no better saw than I,
While bowed I went, all underneath my tread.
Now swell with pride, and on with lofty stalk,
Children of Eve! nor bend your visage aught
So to behold the sinful way ye walk.

More of the mountain than my busied thought
Had been aware of, we had rounded now,
And much more of his course the sun had spent;
When he, who still went first with watchful brow,
Exclaimed: "Look up! to accomplish our ascent
Time no more suffers to proceed so slow.
See yonder angel hastening on his way
To come towards us; and from her service, lo!
The sixth-returning handmaid of the day.
Give to thy mien the grace of reverence, then,
That he may joy to marshal us above.
Think thus: this day will never dawn again."
I had so often felt his words reprove
My slowness, warning me to lose no time,
That on this point I read his dark words right.
With sparkling face, as glows at rosy prime
The tremulous morning star, and robed in white,
That being of beauty moved towards us, and said,
Opening his arms and then his pinions wide:
"Come, here the steps are! easy to the tread
And close at hand: now upward ye may glide."
But very few obey this angel's call.
O human race! born high on wings to soar,
Why at a little breath do ye so fall?
He brought us where the rock a pass revealed
Hewn out, his pinions on my forehead beat,
And with his promise my safe-going sealed.

As, to the right, in climbing to the seat
Of the fair church that looketh lordly down
Over the bridge that bears the name this day
Of Rubaconte, on the well-ruled town,
The sharp ascent is broken by a way
Of stairs constructed in the old time, ere
Fraud was in measure and in ledger found;
Thus the steep bank is graduated there,
Which falls abruptly from the other round:
On either side the tall rock grazes, though.
As we turned thitherward, were voices heard,
Beati pauperes spiritu! singing so
As might not be exprest by any word.
Ah, these approaches, how unlike to Hell's!
With chant of anthems one makes entrance here;
Down there, with agony's ferocious yells.

Now, as we climb, the sacred stairs appear
More easy than the plain had seemed before:
Wherefore I thus began: "O Master! say,
What heavy load is tak'n from me? No more
I feel that weariness upon my way."
"When every *P* upon thy temples traced,
Almost obliterate now," he answered me,
"Shall be, like this one, totally erased,
So by right will shall thy feet vanquished be
That they not only no fatigue shall know,
But even with pleasure shall be forward sped."

Then did I like as men do when they go
Unweeting what they carry on their head,
Till signs from some one their suspicion waking,
The assistant hand its own assurance tries,
And seeks and findeth, such discovery making
As may not be afforded by the eyes;
Spreading my right-hand fingers, I could find
Six letters only of the seven which he
Who bore the keys had on my forehead signed:
Observing which, my Master smiled on me.

CANTO THE THIRTEENTH.

We at the summit of the ladder stood,
Where now a second cut the mountain breaks;
That mount which turneth evil unto good.
Here a like cornice round the hillside takes
Its winding passage like the former one;
Save that its arc a quicker curving makes.
No shade is seen there, sculpture there is none:
As the smooth bank, so does the path appear
Of the same livid color as the stone.

"If to inquire we wait for people here,"
The Poet reasoned, "our election might
Have more delay than we desire, I fear."
Then steadfast on the sun he fixed his sight,

Making one side the centre of his move,
And turning round his left side towards the right,
And saying: "O sweet light that shin'st above
The world, to warm it, in whom I confide,
Entering on this new way, our leader be!
Even such as one up here would have his guide:
If no distraction turn our eyes from thee,
Thy rays through life must ever lead us on."
Now as on earth is reckoned for a mile,
We for about such distance here had gone,
In what our prompt will made a little while;
And towards us flying, although not in sight,
Spirits were heard who did in gentle style
Unto the table of love's feast invite.
And the first voice that passed us, as it flew,
In a loud tone exclaimed: "*They have no wine;*"
And still repeating that, behind us drew.
And ere that voice in distance died, the sign
Was of another passing spirit heard,
Crying: "*I am Orestes!*" then it sped
Even as the other, passing with this word.

"O Father! speak, what sounds are these?" I said:
And, straightway with my question, hark! a third,
Saying: "*Love those men who have done you wrong.*"
And the good Master said: "Here envy's sin

Is scourged, and so the lashes of the thong
Are drawn from love, their penance to begin.
The bridle of a counter-strain will be;
That also thou wilt hear, I judge, ere long,
Before thou reach the pass of pardon. See!
Through the air yonder, fix thy gaze, and keep:
Thou wilt discern some sitting side by side,
Each by himself, along the craggy steep."
Then straining more my vision, I descried
Shadows with mantles of like dolorous hue
As the stone was. And as we nearer came,
I heard them calling: "Mary, pray for us!
Michael and Peter," every saint by name.
I doubt if walketh among living men
A man so hard that had not felt his heart
With pity pierced at what I witnessed then!
For when more nearly I approached that part
Where of their action perfect view was had,
Mine eyes wept so that no more tears remained.

They seemed to me in haircloth vilely clad;
Each with his shoulder the next form sustained,
And all behind were propped against the bank.
So the poor blind, in want of everything,
Stand at the pardon-crosses in a rank,
Asking an alms; and one his head doth bring
Down o'er his fellow's head beside his cheek,
That pity sooner in the breast may spring

Of passers, not more from the words they speak
Than from their look, alike soliciting.
And as no sunbeam comes to their dead sight,
So to the shades of whom I speak, the sun
In heaven yields largess never of its light;
For a steel wire the lids of every one
Runs through, their visual organ stitching tight:
A falcon's eyelids in like mode are seeled,
Lest he prove haggard. But methought it mean
While they so plainly were to me revealed,
To walk among them so, myself unseen.
I turned to my sage Counsel. He full well
Knew what it was the silent man would say,
And waited not for me my wish to tell,
But said: "Brief then, speak wisely as you may."
Virgil on that side of the cornice kept
Where one might fall, no girdle going round
Of outer bank, such slip to intercept:
Against the bank which formed the inner bound
Ranged the doomed shadows, through the horrible seam
Squeezing forth tears until their cheeks were drowned.

"O people certain to behold that beam,"
Turning I said, "which is your one desire,
So may heaven's grace resolve the scum with speed

Of your soiled conscience, that through natures higher
The river of your mind, from envy freed,
May flow pellucid! tell me, for to me
Right gracious it will seem, gracious and dear,
If among you a soul there chance to be
Who is Italian; haply if I hear
It may be well for him." — "O brother mine!
We all are citizens" (one beyond where
We stood replied) "of one true city: thou
Mean'st, lived in Italy, a pilgrim there."

This voice to hear a little onward now
I moved, and marked one spirit by her mien
Expecting something: if you ask me, how,
Like a blind person she upraised her chin.
"Spirit who conquerest thyself to climb,
If thou be that one which replied," I said,
"Make known to me what in the former time
Thy place or name was." This response she made:
"I from Sienna came, and go with these
Purging my life of sin and weeping so,
To Him who soon to pardon may it please!
Sapient indeed I never was, although
Sapìa called among the Siennese;
And far more joyful at another's woe
Was I, than at my own good fortune glad.

And lest thou deem that I deceive thee, know
From mine own lips what a fool's mind I had,
Descending now the archway of my life.
While mine own citizens near Colle's hill
Were with their adversaries joined in strife,
I prayed my God to do His dreadful will.
Routed, they took the bitter pass of flight;
In turn of battle I beheld the chase,
And felt a rapture making all joy light,
So that I lifted insolent my face,
Crying to God: 'No more I dread thy might!'
Like the poor blackbird for a faint sunshine.
My peace with God I sought at life's extreme;
Nor yet were partly paid this debt of mine,
Had it not been that, as I truly deem,
Pier Pettinaio, in his orisons
Remembering me in charity, did grieve.
But who art thou that our conditions
Go'st questioning, eyes open, I believe,
With utterance the carnal breath o'erruns?"
"Mine eyes like yours might here be sealed," I said;
"Not long, however, for these orbs of mine
Not much through envy erred. Far greater dread
My soul suspendeth of their doom who pine
Under the torment of the laden tread;
Even now their penance weighs me more than thine!"

And she to me: "Who hither was thy guide
Up among us, if thou return expect?"
"The one with me who speaks not," I replied.
"And I am living; therefore, spirit elect,
Wouldst have me move my mortal pace for thee
In our old world, prefer me thy request."
"Oh! this to hear is wonderful," said she:
"So strange, God's love for thee is plain exprest!
Then help me by thy prayer; and I entreat
By what thou most desirest, if soe'er
Thou feel the Tuscan soil beneath thy feet,
Report me rightly to my kindred there.
Thou shalt see them among that empty race
Who put their trust in Talamone's dream,
With greater loss of hope, and more disgrace,
Than when they hunted for Diana's stream;
But worse loss yet their admirals must face."

CANTO THE FOURTEENTH.

"WHAT man is this who round our mountain goes,
Before that death has let his pinions free,
Who doth at will his eyelids ope and close?"
"I know not; but am sure not sole is he:
Demand thou of him who the nearest art,
And gently ask, that he may deign reply."
Thus to the right two spirits there, apart,

Bent each toward each, conferred as I came nigh.
Then turning up their faces as to speak,
One said: "O soul! that still in mortal hold
Art on the way thy home in Heaven to seek,
For charity console us, and unfold
Whence comest, and who art thou? for the grace
Accorded thee in us the wonder wakes
Due unto things which ne'er before had place."
And I: "Through middle Tuscany there flows
A brook whose founts in Falterona spring,
Nor do an hundred miles its current close:
From that stream's banks this body of mine I bring:
'T were vain to tell you how my title goes,
For yet my name hath not much heralding."
"If well I probe the sense thou hast conveyed
With intellect," the first who spake replied:
"Thou meanest Arno!" and the other shade
Said to the former: "Wherefore did he hide
That river's name, as men are wont to do
Of things most horrible?" and then the one
Whom that inquiry was directed to,
Discharged him thus: "Why he that name doth shun
I cannot tell: but meet it is the name
Of such a valley perish from the earth!
Since, from its head where so abounds the same
Great Alpine chain which cast Pelorus forth,

With springs that few spots are impregnate more,
To where it seeks, arriving at the main,
What the sky sucks from ocean to restore
(Whence rivers have what waters they contain),
Virtue by all is hunted for a foe
As 't were a snake; whether from fault of place
Or evil custom goading nature so:
Wherefore that miserable valley's race
Have changed their kind to that degree 't would seem
Circe had pastured them. Among brute swine,
More fit for mast than human food, the stream
Winds its poor way; then, lower down its line,
Finds curs that snarl beyond their power to bite,
And turns from them his nostril as in scorn.
Falling it goes; and more it grows in might,
The curst ditch finds that of those dogs are born
A pack of wolves. Through many a whirlpool then
He comes to foxes in deceit so deep
They fear no catching by more crafty men.
What though o'erheard, no silence will I keep!
And well for this man, if in mind he bear
What my true spirit unfolds. One of thy blood
Shall hunt those wolves! I see thy grandson there
Harrowing the borders of that savage flood;
All fly before him, all are in despair:
He makes a market of their living flesh,

Then, like old beasts for slaughter, lays them low,
Staining his fame with many a murder fresh;
He comes all bloody from that wood of woe,
Leaving such wreck, that in a thousand years
To its primeval state it shall not grow."

Like one whose visage alters when he hears
Ill hap foretold, as 't were in dread which way
The blow may strike, I saw that other soul
Stand turned to hear, disturbed and in dismay;
Soon of those words as he had grasped the whole,
His troubled air, and what the other said,
To know their names wrought in me such a thirst
That I with prayers direct inquiry made.
Wherefore the shade who had addrest me first
Began again: "Thou wouldest that I deign
Do thee a grace I did in vain beseech;
But since the will of God in thee so plain
Doth favor show, I will not stint my speech;
Therefore know this: Guido del Duca I.
My blood with envy was so burnt, so bad,
Thou mightst have seen me livid grow and dry,
Had I but seen another's face look glad.
Such of my sowing is the straw I reap!
O human race! why bring your wishes down
To pleasures that exclude all partnership?
This is Rinieri; this the prize and crown
Of Casa Calboli, whereof no child

Hath made himself an heir of his renown.
Nor yet alone hath his blood been despoiled,
'Twixt Po, the Pennine, Reno and the shore,
Of what best needs for truth and happiness;
For through those borders there be plenty more
Of stock so bad, to make their venom less
By cultivation 't were but vain to try.
Where is good Lizio? and Mainardi? Where
Pier Traversaro and Carpigna's Guy?
O Romagnuoles! what bastard shoots ye bear,
When sprouts a Fabbro in Bologna, when
Bernardin Fosco makes Faenza heir
From coarse grass to a growth of gentlemen!
No wonder, Tuscan, at my weeping thus
While I recall, remembering them so well,
Guido of Prata, when himself with us,
And Ugolin of Azzo, used to dwell;
Frederic Tignoso and his goodly troop;
The Traversara, Anastagi's race;
(Now disinherited both houses droop!)
Ladies and knights; the toils' repose and grace
They wrapt us in of courtesy and love,
There where the best blood such bad hearts debase!
O Brettinoro! why dost thou not move
From thy proud seat, thy family wholly gone,
And many more, to shun corruption's course?
Bagnacaval does well to have no son;
And Castrocaro ill, and Conio worse

To breed such counties taking further pains:
And well enough too, when their devil is dead,
May the Pagani do, though some remains
Bear witness 'gainst them of impureness fled.
O Ugolin de' Fantoli! most sure
Is thy good name, since no degenerate head
Is looked for now, its brightness to obscure.
But go thy ways now, Tuscan! more delight
I find in weeping than in words, too stirred
By this talk of our country." We were quite
Sure those dear souls our way's direction heard,
And from their silence knew that we went right.

Soon as proceeding we became alone,
A voice, like lightning when it strikes, did say,
Rushing on tow'rds us with its thunderous tone:
"*Whoever findeth me the same shall slay!*"
Then fled, as thunder, when the bolt is thrown
From the torn cloud, in rumbling dies away.
When on our ears a moment's truce there fell,
Another crash came of like rattling shock
As of a rapid thunder, peal on peal:
"*I am Aglauros, who became a rock!*"
On this, I drew back from my forward pace
To cling for shelter close behind the Bard,
And when the air was hushed in all its space,
He said to me: "That was the bit full hard
Which should each man within his limit stay.

You take the bait so fondly that the small
Hook of th' old enemy makes you his prey,
And bridle boots you naught, nor warning call.
Heaven calleth to you, and the eternal round
Shows you of beauties that about you roll,
And still your eye is grovelling on the ground;
Wherefore He smites you who discerns the whole."

CANTO THE FIFTEENTH.

BETWEEN the third hour's close and dawn of day,
Much as appears of the celestial sphere
Ever in motion, like a child at play,
So much appeared now of the sun's career
To be remaining towards his western way.
There it was evening; here the middle night;
And on our front the rays directly beat,
For we had circled so the hill that right
On towards the sunset we inclined our feet,
When on my brows I felt a load of light,
Greater in splendor than before had been,
And o'er my sense, as 't were from things unknown,
A stupor stole; and of my palms a screen
I made against the excess of light that shone.

As when from water or a mirror's face
The ray leaps upward to the opponent side,

Mounting in like mode as through equal space
The ray descendeth, and with line as wide
From the direct line of a falling stone
(As science shows, and art hath verified),
So did I seem, by some reflected light
Before me there, to be so struck that fain
I would have suddenly withdrawn my sight.

"What is it, gentle Father, that in vain
I shield my visage from, and still towards us
Seems as in motion?" He made this reply:
"Marvel not if, as yet, the splendor thus
Of heaven's bright household overpower thine eye.
This one is sent to ask men up the height;
Soon it shall be that to behold these things
Will cause thee no dismay, but bring delight,
Even as thy soul due disposition brings."
Soon as we reached the blessèd angel's side
He said, with glad voice: "Here you enter in
By steps more easy than you yet have tried."
We thence departed, and, ascending now,
Heard *Beati Misericordes* chanted
Below, behind us, and "Be joyful thou
To whom to conquer in this pass is granted!"

My Master and myself in lonely mood
Still mounting, I considered as I went
How I might gather from his word some good,

And turned to him inquiringly: "What meant
That spirit of Romagna speaking so
Of partnership forbid?" He made reply:
"Of his own worst defect he now doth know
The torment; therefore, do not wonder why
Others he chides to make their penance less.
Because you point your wishes at a prize
Where part is lost if it permit largesse,
Envy's bad bellows move your selfish sighs.
But if the love of the supernal sphere
Heavenward exalted every wish of yours,
Your bosom would not harbor that low fear;
For so much more as there they speak of *Ours*,
More love in that celestial cloister glows,
And so much more of good each soul secures."

"Now to be satisfied my hunger grows,"
I answered, "and my mind is more in doubt
Than if no question I had asked of thee!
How comes it, that a blessing parcelled out
More rich its many owners makes to be
Than if a few possessed it?" He replied:
"Because thy mind its reasoning cannot stretch
Beyond those things of earth to which 't is tied;
Thou from true light dost only darkness fetch.
That Good ineffable and infinite
Who dwells above there, runs to love as fleet
As to a lucid body a ray of light,

And so much giveth as it finds of heat.
Broad as the flame of charity may burn,
The eternal flame above it grows more great.
And more their number is who heavenward yearn,
More for his love there are, and they love more,
Like mirrors that each other's light return.
Now, if thou hunger still, despite my lore,
Thou shalt see Beatrice, and sure she will
Give unto this and every wish repose;
Only may those five wounds remaining still,
That heal in aching, like the twain soon close!"

Whiles I was musing, and would fain have said,
"*Thou hast contented me*," I looked, and, lo!
To the next cornice we had come; here fled
All power of speech, mine eyes were ravished so.
For, seized with ecstacy, I seemed to be
Rapt in a sudden vision of a crowd
Met in a temple. I could also see
That entering, 'mid those men, a woman stood
With sweet mien of a mother, saying: "*Why*
Hast thou so dealt with us, my darling son?
Behold, in every place thy sire and I
Have sought thee sorrowing." Soon as she had done
This vision vanished, and I next beheld
Another lady, with such drops besprent
As down the cheeks flow from a bosom swelled

With scorn of some one and by anguish rent;
Saying: "*If thou be ruler of the town,*
About whose name the gods had such a strife
And whence all knowledge gleams to give renown,
Pisistratus! avenge thee on his life
Whose bold embrace hath brought our daughter down!"
And her lord seemed to me benign and mild,
Answering with aspect that her fury stemmed:
"*What should we do to one that harmed our child,*
If one caressing her be so condemned?"
Next I saw people raging hot in ire,
Slaying a youth with stones, and shouting loud:
"*Martyr him! martyr him!*" in tumult dire;
And I saw him drop down before the crowd
Dying, but lifting, ere he did expire,
Looks that might win compassion for his foes;
And with such eyes they seemed the doors of Heaven,
Praying the most high Father that for those
Who wrought such wrong, their sin might be forgiven.

Soon as my mind, that from itself had swerved,
Came back to true things that outside it lie,
I knew my dreams false, but their truth observed.
My Leader then, who could perceive that I

Walked like a man by somnolence unnerved,
Said: Come! what ails thee that thou canst not keep
Thy footing straight, but more than half a league
Hast moved with faltering steps, as if by sleep
Or wine o'ercome, and eyes that show fatigue?"
I answered: "O sweet Father! I will tell,
If thou wilt hear me, all that I have seen,
While my limbs failed me, and my strength so fell."
And he replied: "Shouldst thou thy visage screen
Beneath an hundred masks, I still could spell
Each slightest thought of thine, and read thy dreams.
This vision came lest thou be self-excused
Thy heart from opening to the peace that streams
From love's eternal fount o'er all diffused.
I did not ask 'What ails thee?' as men speak,
Who look with mortal eye that cannot see
The soul without its body. Thou wast weak,
And I, to strengthen, reprehended thee.
So men are wont dull servants to reprove,
That when their watch comes round are slow to stir."

During these words we did not cease to move
On through the evening, and attentive were
To look beyond us, far as vision might,

Against the level sun's o'erpowering rays;
And towards us, lo! a vapor, dun as night,
Little by little growing on our gaze,
Deprived us of pure air and dimmed our sight;
Nor was there shelter from the blinding haze.

CANTO THE SIXTEENTH.

BLACKNESS of hell, and of a night unblest
By any planet in a barren sky
Which dunnest clouds to utmost gloom congest,
Could not with veil so gross have barred mine eye,
Nor so austere to sense, as now oppressed
Us in that fog which we were folded by.
Its sharpness open eye might not abide;
Therefore my wise and faithful Escort lent
His shoulder's aid, nigh-coming to my side,
And, thus companioned, close with him I went
(Like a blind man who goes behind his guide,
Lest he go wrong or strike him against aught
To kill him, haply, or his life impair)
On through that sharp and bitter air, in thought
My Duke observing, who still said: "Beware
Lest thou be separate from me!" Anon
Voices I heard, and each voice seemed in prayer
For peace and pity to the Holy One
Of God, the Lamb who taketh sins away;

Still from them all one word, one measure streamed,
Still *Agnus Dei* prelude of their lay,
So that among them perfect concord seemed.
"Those, then, are spirits, Master, that I hear?"
I asked. He answered: "Rightly hast thou deemed:
They go untangling anger's knot severe."
"Now who art thou discoursing at thy will
Of us? Who cleavest with thy shape our smoke
As time by calends thou wert measuring still?"
So said a voice, whereat my Master spoke:
"Ask him if any mounteth hence, up there."
And I: "O being, who dost make thee pure
Unto thy Maker to return as fair
As thou wert born! draw near me, and full sure
Thou shalt hear something to awake thy stare."
"Far will I follow as allowed," he said;
"And if the smoke permit us not to see,
Our sense of hearing may avail instead
Of sight, and grant me to converse with thee."
Then I began: "With that same fleshly frame
Which death dissolveth, I am bound above;
Here through the infernal embassy I came.
And if God so enfold me in his love
That His grace grants me to behold His court
In manner diverse from all modern wont,
Keep not from me the knowledge, but report
Who thou wast, living, and if up the mount
My course is right: thy word shall us escort."

"Lombard I was, and Mark the name I bore;
I knew the world, and loved that sort of worth
At which men bend their bows not any more.
Thy course is right: climb on directly forth."
He answered, adding: "Pray for me when thou
Shalt be up there." I answered him: "I bind
Myself in good faith by a solemn vow
To grant thy wish; but with one doubt my mind
Will burst within, unless I solve it now.
The simple doubt which I had formed before,
From others' words, is doubled now by thine,
Which, joined with those words, make my doubt the more.
The world, in sooth, as I may well divine
From what thou say'st, is wicked at the core
And clothed with evil; of all virtue bare.
Show me, I pray, that I may tell again
Others, the cause of this; for some declare
That Heaven is cause of ill, and some say men."
A deep-drawn sigh which anguish made a groan
First giving vent to, "Brother," spake he then:
"The world is blind; sure thou of them art one!
Ye, who are living, every cause refer
Still to high Heaven, as though necessity
Moved all things through Heaven's motion. If this were,
Freedom of will impossible would be,
Nor were it just that goodness should for her

Sure meed have joy, and badness, misery.
Heaven to your actions the first movement gives;
I say not all: but granted I say all,
For good or evil each his light receives,
And a free will, which, if it do not fall,
But win Heaven's first hard battle, then it lives,
And, if well-trained, is never held in thrall.

"To greater power and to a higher soul
Free, ye are subject; and that power in you
Creates the mind, which no stars can control:
Hence if the present world go wrong, 't is due
To your own selves; and of this theme the whole
I will expound as an informer true.
Forth from His hand (before its birth who smiled
On his new offspring) into being goes
A little weeping, laughing, wanton child,
The simple infant soul that nothing knows,
Save that, by pleasure willingly beguiled,
She turns to joy as her glad Maker chose.
Taste of some trifling good it first perceives,
And, cheated so, runs for the shining flower,
Unless a rein or guide its love retrieves.
Hence there was need of law's restraining power;
A king there needed, that at least some one
Of God's true city might discern the tower.
The laws exist, but who maintains them? none;
Because the Shepherd, sovereign of the fold,

Though he may ruminate, no cleft hoof bears:
The people then, seeing their guide so fond
Of what they crave, and with like greed as theirs,
Pasture with him, and seek no good beyond.
'T is plain to see that what hath made mankind
So bad, is evil guidance, not your own
Corrupted nature. Once of old there shined
The twofold splendors of a double sun
In Rome, which city brought the world to good;
One showed the way of earth to men, and one
Gave them to see the other way, of God.
One hath destroyed the other, and the sword
Is with the crosier joined, that neither fears
The other's check; so joined, they ill accord.
If thou dost doubt me, think what fruit appears
In the full blade, since every plant we know
For good or evil by the seed it bears.
Once in that goodly region by the Po
And Adige watered, valor used to dwell
And courtesy, ere Frederic's trouble came:
Now one might journey through that country well
Secure from meeting (if it gave him shame
To speak with good men) any that excel.
Three old men yet dwell there in whom the old
Chides the new age, and time seems slow to run
To them, till God replace them in his fold:
Currado da Palazzo, he is one,
Gherardo likewise, of the life unblamed,

And Guido da Castello, who perchance
Simply the Lombard might be better named,
After the fashion of their speech in France.
Say thou this day, then, that the Church of Rome,
Confounding human rule and sway divine,
Sinks, with her charge, beluted in the loam."
"Thou reasonest well," I said, "O Marco mine!
And I perceive now why the sacred tome
The sons of Levi bars from heritage.
But who is that Gherardo who thou say'st
Remaineth in rebuke of this rough age
From those who formerly the realm possessed?"

"Either thy tongue misleads me, or thou show'st
A wish to try me," he to me replied,
"That, using Tuscan speech, thou nothing know'st
Of good Gherardo. No surname beside
I know, unless unto that name he bore
One from his daughter Gaia be supplied.
Go thou with God! I follow thee no more.
See! raying yonder through the fog, a gleamy
Splendor that whitens it; I must away
(It is the Angel there!) before he see me."
Thus turned he, nor would hear me further say.

CANTO THE SEVENTEENTH.

BETHINK thee, reader, if thou e'er hast been
Among the Alps o'ertaken by a cloud,
Through which all objects were as blindly seen
As moles behold things through their visual shroud,
How, as the vapors dank and thick begin
To thin themselves, the solar sphere's faint ray
Scarce pierces them; then readily mayst thou
Conceive, when first I saw it, in what way
To me the sun looked that was setting now.
From such a cloud, and following as I went
My Master's faithful steps with even pace,
I came to where the day's last rays were spent
On the low border of the mountain's base.

O gift imaginative! that dost so
Of ourselves rob us, that ofttimes a man
Heeds not, though round him thousand trumpets blow!
If thee sense move not, whence the power that can?
A light moves thee, Heaven-kindled, and doth flow
By will divine directed, or its own.
My fancy with her fury was engrossed
Who took the shape of that sweet bird well known
To be of his own song enamored most;

And here my mind was in itself so chained,
That it received no object from outside.
Then into my high fantasy there rained
The image of a person crucified,
Fierce in his aspect, with a face of hate,
When, with this look, despitefully he died.
Round him there stood Ahasuerus great,
Esther his spouse, and Mordecai the true,
Of whose just word just action still was mate.
And as this image from my mind withdrew,
Of itself breaking as a bubble does,
Failing the water under which it grew,
A damsel weeping on my vision rose,
Moaning aloud and crying: "*Why, O queen!*
Hast thou through anger wished thyself undone?
Not to lose thy Lavinia, thou hast ta'en
Thy life, and lost me! Mother, I am one
Doomed to mourn thee more than a husband slain!"

Even as our slumber, when a flash of light
A sleeper's eyes doth suddenly confront,
Is broken, quivering ere it dieth quite,
So fell my vision, as a beam past wont
In its excess of splendor smote my sight.
I turned to see where 't was I had been brought,
When a voice called to me: "Climb here the hill!"

This put all other purpose from my thought,
And gave such eagerness unto my will
To find that counsellor and mark his mien,
My spirit went unsatisfied until
Face unto face the speaker might be seen.
And, as one views not the sun's figure clear
Through light's great superflux that blinds our gaze,
So was my visual virtue wanting here.
"This is a heavenly spirit," Virgil says,
"That with his splendor veils him from thine eye,
And guides us up our way, nor waits for prayer.
He does by us as men would be done by;
For who sees need, and doth, till asked, forbear,
Already seems ill-purposed to deny.
Such invitation let our feet obey!
Haste we to mount before the darkness grow,
For then we could not till return of day."
So spake my Leader: I beside him slow
Pacing, we bended toward a stair our way;
And, as my foot the first ascension pressed,
I felt a movement near me as of wings
Fanning my face, and then a voice said: "Blest
Are the peacemakers! evil angerings
They know not." Overhead the sun's last rays
Were so uplifted, followed by the night,
That round us many a star began to blaze.
And, as I felt my body's waning might,

"Why dost thou fail me, O my strength?" I said:
But having come now where we climbed no more,
On the stair's brink we ceased our toilsome tread,
Fixed as a vessel that arrives at shore.
I stopped awhile, and waited as to hear
In this new circle aught perchance of sound,
Then thus addressed my Lord: "My Father dear!
Say, what offence is punished in this round?
Stay not thy speech, although thy feet are stayed."
"The love of good," thus Virgil me bespoke,
"Wherein deficient, here is perfect made;
Here the slow oar receives amending stroke.
But that thy mind with more expanded powers
May conceive this, attend to me, nor shun
To reap some harvest from this halt of ours.

"Never creator," he began, "my son,
Was without love, nor anything create;
Either love natural, or that nobler one
Born of the mind; thou know'st the truth I state.
Natural love ne'er takes erroneous course;
Through ill-directed aim the other may,
Or from excess, or from a want of force.
While o'er its bent the Primal Good hath sway,
While with due check it seeks the inferior good,
It cannot be the source of wrong delight.
But when it swerves to ill, or if it should
Seek good with more or less zeal than is right,

Against the Maker doth his work rebel.
Whence mayst thou comprehend how love in you
Must of all virtue be the seed, as well
As of each action to which pain is due.
Now since love must look ever towards its own
Subjects' well-being, things are from self-hate
Saved; and since naught can be supposed alone
Extant, from the First Being separate,
Hatred of Him is also spared to men.
Remains (if rightly I divide, I say)
The ill that 's loved must be a neighbor's then,
And in three modes this love springs in your clay.
One, through the crushing of his fellow, fain
Would come to eminence, with sole desire
His greatness o'er that other's to maintain.
One at another's rising feareth loss
Of power, fame, favor, and his own good name;
So sickens, joying in his neighbor's cross.
And there is one whom wrong so weighs with shame,
That greed of vengeance doth his heart engross;
And such must needs work evil for his brother.
This threefold bad love those mourn here below:
Now I would have thee learn about another,
Which runs to good, but doth no measure know.
All vaguely apprehend a good wherein
The soul may rest itself; and all men woo
This imaged weal, and seek its peace to win.
And if thereon but languid love ye set,

Or be full slack to seek, such sin ye rue
Along this round, though after just regret.
There is another good, far, far, from bliss!
Nor makes man happy: not the essence true
Of all availing fruit the root. To this
The love which too much doth itself resign
Is mourned for in three cornices above;
But how tripartite, I will not define:
Thou shalt, by seeing, learn about that love."

CANTO THE EIGHTEENTH.

The lofty Doctor ended his discourse
And gazed intently in mine eyes to see
If I looked satisfied. The stinging force
Of a new thirst was still tormenting me,
And I stood silent; but within, "Perchance,"
I said, "this too much questioning of mine
Annoys him." He, true Father! at a glance
The timid wish unuttered could divine,
And spake, in speech emboldening my advance.
"Master," I said, "in thy light's ray mine own
Sight is so quickened that I see most clear
Far as thy reasoning bears or maketh known:
Wherefore, I pray thee, gentle Father dear,
To show me what love is, to which alone
Every good act and bad thou dost refer."

"Turn unto me the sharpest gleams," he said,
"Of thine own intellect, and thou wilt find
Their error manifest by whom are led
Most men: the self-made leaders, themselves blind.

"The mind, create with tendency to love,
Towards aught which pleases it is quick to spring,
Soon as from pleasure it begins to move.
Your apprehension from some real thing
Unfolds in you an image that it wove
And turns the soul that way. If, growing fond
Of such an object, she incline thereto,
That inclination love is, nature's bond,
By sense of pleasure newly bound in you.
Then, as the flame which ever upward strives,
Born, by its fashion, to ascend where fire
In its own element the longest lives,
So mounts the kindled soul into desire;
A motion spiritual, without repose,
Until the soul possess what gives delight.
Now mayest thou note how truth is hid from those
Who say that all love in itself is right;
For even though haply its material should
Seem always good, not every impress might
Be without fault, albeit the wax were good."

"Thy words, and my swift intellect, that sped
After each word, have opened to my mind

Love and its working; yet more doubt," I said,
"Impregnates me. Unless the soul may find
Some other footing, and to love be led,
What merit whether right or wrong it go?"

He answered: "Far as reason may discern
Here I can tell thee; all else thou shalt know
From Beatrice; when faith works, thou wilt learn.
Every essential form that is connected
With matter, yet from matter separate,
Has in it a specific grace collected
Which never doth its nature demonstrate
Unless it work; felt only by the effect,
As life in plants by the green leaves is shown.
How dawn the first desires, whence intellect
The first ideas hath, is to man unknown:
These are in you as business in the bee
To make his honey; and this primal will
No praise deserveth, and from blame is free.
Now since all others flock towards this one still,
The power that counselleth is born in you,
Consent's doorkeeper, standing on the sill.
Here is that principle to which is due
Occasion of your good or ill desert,
As ye chose good, and from the bad withdrew.
The deepest reasoners always did assert
This innate freedom, of whose law they knew,
And hence bequeathed their ethic rules to men:

That every love which kindleth you doth rise
From such necessity, supposing then
The power to govern it within you lies.
Freedom of will is named by Beatrice
The noble faculty; in thy replies,
Should she discourse thereof, remember this."

Almost at midnight the belated moon
Rose like a burning bucket, in whose blaze
The dwindled stars but few or faintly shone,
Crossing the constellations by those ways
Which men in Rome see flaming, when the sun
Sets 'twixt Sardinia and the Corsic isle.
That gentle shade from whom Pietòla's town
Is now more famed than Mantua was erewhile,
Had loosed the burden that had weighed me down,
And, on my questionings, relieved my mind
By plain solution. Drowsily and dumb
I stood, like one to somnolence inclined;
But soon my dreaming was dispelled by some
That suddenly ran crowding up behind
Our shoulders, close toward us already come.
And as along Ismenus and thy shore,
Asopus! night saw rush the frenzied throng
Whenever Thebes would Bacchus' aid implore,
So, judging from those first who led along,
This people, curving round the cornice, pour,
Whom just love warms and good will spurreth

Soon they were full upon us, all so fast
Of that great multitude came and were gone!
And two in front cried, weeping as they passed:
"To the hill-country Mary sped amain!
And Cæsar to smite Lerida made haste,
Struck at Marseilles, then darted into Spain!"
"Quick! quick!" the next cried; "not a moment waste
Through want of love! so grace may freshly grow
For us, as in well-doing we make haste."

"O ye, in whom a zeal more fervid now
Pays haply for that negligence and sloth
Which lukewarmness once gave your doing well!
This being who lives (and sure I utter truth),
Would climb the hill, should sunlight aid us. Tell,
Therefore, where we the nearest pass may find?"
These were the words that from my Leader fell.
And straight one spirit replied: "Follow behind
Our footsteps; thou wilt find the open place.
Our own ascent so fills our every thought
We may not linger: therefore yield us grace,
If penitence in courtesy lack aught.
Once at San Zeno in Verona, I
Was Abbot, in good Barbarossa's days,
Whom still to mention maketh Milan sigh.
He in the grave one foot already has
Who for that monastery soon must mourn,

And for the sway he held therein be sad;
Because that son of his, the evil-born,
In his whole body bad, in mind most bad,
He in the seat of its true pastor placed!"
If more he said, or ceased, I cannot tell,
Even now beyond us he so far had raced;
But this with pleasure I remember well.

He then, my help at every need who brought
Said: "Turn this way; observe the pair that come
Their own sloth biting with remorseful thought."
Behind the rest they murmured: "Those for whom
The Red Sea opened, all were dead before
Jordan beheld their children in his land!
And they, who could not to the close endure
His labors with Æneas, kept the strand
Of Sicily, nor lived for glory more."

When the swift spirits round the hill had fled
So far they were not in our vision's range,
A new thought entered me, from which was bred
Full many another novel thought and strange,
Until mine eyes in pleasing drowsihead
I closed, and thinking, did to slumber change.

CANTO THE NINETEENTH.

In that hour's chillness when the heat of day
Tempers the coldness of the moon no more,
Vanquished by Earth, or oft by Saturn's sway,
When geomancers in the East, before
The dawn's white light subduing soon the gray,
Read of their major fortune the bright score,
There came, in dream, a woman to my sight,
Stammering, cross-eyed, maimed in both hands, each one
Of her feet clubbed, with countenance dead-white.
I looked on her, and even as the sun
Comforts the cold limbs all benumbed by night,
So gave my gaze a glibness to her tongue;
Her shape grew straight, and love's lost coloring ran
Back through her cheeks, as love would have them, young.

Then, with her speech thus loosened, she began
To sing so, not to listen had been pain:
"I 'm the sweet Siren, I am she who can
Misguide the mariners in the middle main;
So full of pleasaunce is my voice to hear!
I turned Ulysses with the notes I pour,
From his vague wanderings; and whoso gives ear,

To grow familiar, seldom giveth o'er
Delight in following one so wholly dear:
Who learns to love me, leaves me nevermore."
Scarce was her mouth shut when a lady came
Up close beside me, rapid in her tread,
Whose holy mien that other put to shame.
"O Virgil, Virgil!" angrily she said;
"What wretch is this?" and while my Master bent
His steps toward her, fixed by her innocent face,
She seized that other, and her garment rent
Before her bosom, and disrobed the place
Which broke my slumber with its noisome scent.

I turned mine eyes, good Virgil saying: "At least
Thrice have I called thee: rise, and let us find
The pass where we may enter." Ere he ceased
I had sprung up. The new-born sun behind
Spread o'er the circles and the day increased,
Till all the sacred hill in glory shined.
I, following, bore my forehead in a ridge,
Like one whose front is bent by thought severe,
And makes himself the half-arch of a bridge,
When these words caught me: "Come! the pass is here!"
Benignly uttered, in so sweet a tone
As ne'er was heard upon this mortal strand.
With open wings, that seemed as of a swan,

The angel waved us upward with his hand
Between the two walls of the flinty stone,
Then moved those pinions and our faces fanned,
Affirming: "*Blessed are the souls that mourn!*
They shall be comforted." And while he stood
A little over us, my Guide in turn
Began to say to me: "What means thy mood?
What bends thy look so to the earth below?"
"A recent vision that was mine," said I,
"Makes me thus faltering, doubtful as I go,
For from the thought of it I cannot fly."
"That ancient sorceress hast beheld," said he,
"To whom the spirits up higher their misery owe?
Didst mark how man from her foul spell gets free?
Enough! with haughty heel smite fast the ground,
And fix thine eye where Heaven's eternal King
Lures thee with His great spheres' perpetual round."
Even as the falcon ere he make his spring
Looks at his foot, then turns him at the cry
To snatch the food that he is tempted toward
Through greediness thereof, the same was I;
And where the cloven rock did way afford
To one in climbing, I went up as high
As the next cornice round the mountain scored.

Loosed into this fifth circle freely forth,
I saw a people weeping all around

With down-turned faces prostrate on the earth.
"*Adhæsit pavimento! to the ground*
My soul did cleave," I heard; but in their birth
These words were almost choked with sighs profound.
"O souls elect of God! whose sufferings
Justice and hope temper to lesser pain,
Direct us where the lofty stairway springs."
"Free from our penance if ye come, and fain
Would find the way more quickly, ever bear
Towards the right hand, keeping the hill inside."
So prayed the Poet, and some spirit there,
A little way before us, thus replied.
Which the hid speaker was, the sound betrayed:
Mine own eyes met the looking of my Lord;
Whence of assent a cheerful sign he made
To what he saw my dumb desire implored.
And when I felt that he meant, "*Yes, you can!*"
Straight I moved on that grovelling creature toward
(Whose words had made me note him), and began:
"Spirit! whose grief that penitence matures
Without which God receiveth back no man,
Suspend awhile that chief concern of yours.
Tell who thou wast; and wherefore prone ye lie?
And wouldst thou that I help thee with my prayer?
For I am living in the world on high."
And he: "Thou shalt know for what sin we bear

Our backs turned heavenward; but know first that I
Was a successor once to Peter's chair.

"Between Chiaveri and Sestri flows
Down a fair streamlet, from the name whereof
The title of my blood and family rose.
One month, and little more, was mine to prove
How the great mantle weighs on him that fain
Would keep it spotless: every load would seem
Feathers to that. Late penitence, how vain!
But when Rome's pastor I was made, the dream
Broke, and the falsehood of my life was plain.
That lofty seat I could not climb above;
Yet there I found the heart was not at rest,
Whence of this life awoke in me the love.
Up to that point I was a wretch whose breast
With avarice rank against my Maker strove:
Now here behold me to this doom depressed!
What avarice bringeth, now is rendered clear,
In the purgation of these penitent souls,
Nor has this mount a penance more severe.
Even as our vision, fixed on earthly goals,
Never looked upward, Justice sinks it here
Earthward, long ages. And as avarice killed
Our zeal for good (so love's effect was lost!)
Bound hand and foot, till Justice be fulfilled,
Must we lie here to learn what avarice cost,
Stretched moveless, long as the just Lord hath
willed."

I had kneeled down to him, and would have spoken,
But at my first word, listening, he perceived
By my near voice the reverential token,
And said: "Why stoop?" I answered: "It relieved
Mine upright conscience not to stand before
Such dignity as thine." Then he, as grieved:
"Straighten thy limbs, my brother! err no more.
I am the fellow-servant (bend thee not!)
Of these and thee, to one supernal power.
If thou hast read, nor hast His voice forgot,
Where in the Holy Gospel He doth say
These words: '*They neither marry*,' thou wilt know
Why I speak thus. Now I beseech thee, stay
No longer with me; I would have thee go:
Thy tarrying stops the tears which thou didst say
Mature the penitence wherefrom they flow.
I have, on earth, a kinswoman by name
Alagia: innocent, unless our line
Corrupt by bad example, bring her blame;
And she is all remains that once was mine."

CANTO THE TWENTIETH.

A WEAK will yields, by better over-willed;
Whence, to please him, my pleasure I postponed,

And from the water drew the sponge unfilled.
My Guide and I, among the spirits that moaned,
Where space was found, shouldering the rocky steep,
Crept, as one walking on a city wall
Hugs close the battlement. The souls that weep
From worn eyes, drop by drop, the sin that all
The whole world occupies, too closely crowd
Upon that other side whence one might fall.

Accursèd be thou, wolf of ancient brood
That hast more prey than any beast beside!
Having a greed so infinite for food.
O Heaven! in whose bright circlings men confide
To change the state of things down here below,
When will He come who shall drive her to Hell?
Onward we move with footsteps few and slow,
While those poor shadows by their moans compel
Me still to list their weeping and their woe.
By chance before me one cried in such strain
Of agony: "Sweet Mary!" that methought
I heard some woman in her time of pain.
Then followed thus: "How lowly was thy lot!
As by that humble hostelry is plain
Where with thy holy burden thou wast brought."
Following I heard: "O good Fabricius! thou
Wouldst rather have thy virtue and be poor,
Than vice with riches!" These words pleased me now,

And I drew further forward to make sure
What spirit he was; for still he spake in praise
Of that dower Nicholas for the damsels made,
To lead their youth in honor's holy ways.
"O soul so nobly speaking there," I said;
"Tell me who wast thou? and I fain would learn
Why thou alone dost these just lauds renew:
Thy words shall be well paid, if I return
To round the brief road left me to pursue
Of mortal being hastening to its bourne."
He answered: "I will tell, not hoping aught
Of comfort there from any mortal breath,
But for the miracle of grace thus wrought
In thy strange visit here before thy death.
Of that pernicious tree I was the root
Whose deadly shade so blights each Christian land
That seldom aught is cropped save evil fruit.
But might Douay, Ghent, Lille or Bruges make stand,
Swift vengeance would ensue. Soon may it be!
All-judging One! I ask it at thy hand.
Hugh Capet I was called on earth: from me
Each Louis, and those Philips, every one,
Whom France is ruled by, in this later day,
Had birth! and I, a Paris butcher's son.

The ancient race of kings had passed away,
All but a nameless one in gray attire,

When in my gripe I felt the reins of sway
For that old kingdom, and did soon acquire
Such strength thereby, such plenitude of friends,
That to the crown without a lord my son's
Head was promoted; and from him descends
This present line of consecrated bones.
Ere the great dower of Provence banished shame
Out of our blood, if weak, our sins were few.
Thenceforth with fraud and many a falsehood came
Our course of rapine: then we seized Ponthieu,
Normandy, Gascony, to make amends;
Charles came in Italy and there he slew
His victim Conradin, to make amends;
Then sent home Thomas on his heavenward way,
Him of Aquinum, all to make amends.
A time I see, not far off from to-day,
That brings another Charles from that same France,
The better to make known himself and friends.
Unarmed he sallies forth, except the lance
That Judas jousted with, and that he sends
Home through the bowels of Florence till she burst!
Lack land he may, but shall not lack disgrace,
Nor crime; for which he shall be more accursed
The less he counts his damning ravage base.
I see, just sailed, made prisoner on the waves,
That other Charles his daughter trade for gold,
Even as the Corsairs do with other slaves.

What worse in store, O avarice! canst thou hold
For us, that hast my blood perverted so
It recks not of its own flesh bought and sold?
That less may seem all past, all future woe,
Entering Anagni's gates the flower-de-luce
My vision shows, and Christ Himself brought low
By his own Vicar's capture and abuse.
I see Christ mocked again! yea, my soul grieves
To see renewed the vinegar and gall
And Himself slain between two living thieves.
I see that pitiless man whom now I call
The modern Pilate; for all this but leaves
His lust unsated, and his power prevails
Against the temple; no decretal gives
Charter: the pirate goes with greedy sails.
Oh, when shall I be gladdened, my Lord God!
To see the vengeance that awhile doth hide,
In secret calm, that stays Thine anger's rod?

About the Holy Spirit's only bride
That which I said, and all that made thee draw
Towards me for comment which I spake beside,
Even such response, by daylight, is the law
That rules our prayers; but soon as night comes
on
Our counter-burden in its turn begins.
We tell the tale then of Pygmalion:
His avarice, that brought on so many sins,

Miser, thief, traitor, parricide, in one;
The misery of that miser Midas then
Following his gluttonous desire of gold
That made him evermore the jest of men;
Of Acham next the fond record is told
Who stole the spoils, and Joshua's wrath did rouse
That still we seem his vengeance to behold;
Then we condemn Sapphira with her spouse,
And praise the hoof-prints Heliodorus felt;
Now the whole mountain round resounds once more
The shame of Polymnestor, he who spilt
For greed of gold the blood of Polydore;
Lastly our song is Crassus and his guilt:
'Tell, thou who know'st! what sapor has that ore?'
Just as our passion prompts us is our tone,
Now slow, now rapid; sometimes with much force,
Then low we speak; our penance thus is shown.
But at those lauds which formed our day's discourse,
Though none spake near me, I was not alone."

We had from him departed now, and strained
Hard to o'ercome our difficult road, as well
As was permitted to what strength remained;
When suddenly, as 't were some great thing fell,
I felt the mountain tremble: such cold chained

My limbs as taketh one going forth to die.
Sure Delos was not with such violence riven,
Before Latona found wherein to lie,
A nest for nursing those twin eyes of heaven.
Then upon every side was raised a cry
So loud that close to me the Master came
And said: "While I am guiding do not fear."
"*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*" this acclaim
The whole were shouting, as from those most near
I judged the chorus of the rest the same.

Like those old shepherds who first heard that lay
We stood immovable and in suspense,
Till the cry ceased, the trembling died away.
Then did our holy journey recommence,
Viewing the shades to their accustomed wail
Turning, and grovelling in their penitence.
Never did ignorance my mind assail
With such a battle of desire to learn,
(Unless herein my recollection fail)
As seemed to make the soul within me yearn.
I dared not slack our speed by asking aught,
Nor of myself the cause could I discern:
So timidly I went, and full of thought.

CANTO THE TWENTY-FIRST.

THE natural thirst that never is allayed
Save by that water, grace whereof to taste
The lowly woman of Samaria prayed,
Troubled me now; and vexed me to the haste
Wherewith o'er that packed shelf my way I made
Behind my Leader, pitying that just doom:
And lo! as Luke describes how Christ once showed
When freshly risen from the sepulchral gloom,
Unto those two disciples on the road,
So, coming after us appeared a shade,
Eying the crowd amid whose forms he trod;
Nor took we note of him until he said:
"My brothers, be with you the peace of God!"

Virgil and I turned suddenly, and he
Returned the greeting with response benign,
Then added this: "May peace thy portion be
In the blest council of Truth's court divine,
Whose doom to endless exile bindeth me!"
He answered, matching Virgil's pace and mine:
"If ye are souls whom God disdains on high,
Who led you thus far up His heavenly stairs?"
"If thou regard," my Teacher made reply,
"What sword-marks from that angel's hand he bears,

Well mayst thou note he with good souls must reign.
But since that maid who spinneth day and night
Had not yet drawn for him the distaff's pile
Which Clotho portions for each living wight,
His spirit (thy sister and mine own), the while
He came above, could not ascend alone,
By reason that it sees not in our style.
Hence from the ample gullet I was drawn
Of Hell to show unto this living man
The things of this place, and shall guide him on
To show him more things, far as my school can.
But if thou know'st, give us the reason why
The mountain trembled so just now, and all
Even to its watery base raised such a cry?"
Mine own desire his question did recall,
Threading it so that hope of the reply
Stayed my thirst somewhat. He thus broke the pause.

"'T was naught irregular: this holy hill
Moved not from the religion of its laws
In way unusual; it remaineth still
Free, subject ne'er to any altering cause;
No reason else, then, why it trembled so
Save that Heaven's will some soul to Heaven doth call:
Since never tempest, rain, nor hail, nor snow,
Dew nor hoar-frost, upon this mount doth fall,

Above that short flight of three steps below.
No clouds come there, nor any wandering mist;
No meteor's gleam, nor lightning; nor the bow,
Daughter of Thaumas, oft from east to west
Changing position. Vapors dry with heat
Pass not those steps whereof before I spake,
And on which Peter's Vicar plants his feet.
Lower down, it haply more or less may shake;
But from wind pent (how, I could not declare)
Within the earth, this part did never quake.
With us this mountain trembleth whensoe'er
Any soul riseth, feeling purified,
Or moves towards Heaven, to enter heavenly-fair!
The sole sign of a spirit's purity
Is when a will, all free to change abode,
Seizes the soul, assisting it to fly.
Justice Divine its first desire for good
Restraineth by the same propensity
For penance here, that erst for sin it showed.
And I, who in this misery have lain
Five hundred years and more, felt only now
Free will that better threshold to obtain.
Hence was this earthquake; for this reason thou
Heardst thro' the mount the spirits in this glad
strain
Glorify God: soon may He them invite!"
These things he told us; and as thirst's excess
Gives to the sense of drinking more delight,

What good he gave me ne'er could I express.
"Then," said the sapient Guide, "I fathom quite
The nature of the net which holds you here;
How you escape it, whence this trembling rose,
And you exult so, plainly doth appear.
Now may it please thee unto me disclose
Who thou wast once? And tell the reason why
So many a century thou hast lain with those."

"When the good Titus, helped by the Most High,
Avenged those wounds from which the life-drops came
Which Judas sold," the spirit thus made reply,
"Famous I was, by that most honored name
And most enduring; yet no faith had I.
So sweet my vocal genius was, that Rome
To herself called me, meriting to wear
My temples myrtled, from Toulouse, my home:
Statius the people call me still down there.
Of Thebes, then great Achilles, did I sing;
But on my way fell with my second load.
The sparks that kindled me, and were the spring
Of all the heat wherewith my genius glowed,
From the divine flame rose, whence many more,
More than a thousand, have received their light.
I speak of that Æneid which of yore
A mother was, and nursed my gift to write:
I, without that, had scarce a drachma weighed;

And to have lived on earth when Maro lived
Here, under ban, I willingly had stayed
Beyond my term, one sun more, unreceived!"

These words made Virgil turn towards me his head,
With silent look, that seemed to whisper, "*Hush!*"
But power to do, and will, are not one thing;
For tears and laughter oft so fleetly rush
After emotions from whose force they spring,
In men most true they least obey the will:
I slightly smiled as one who winketh might.
Wherefore the shadow ceased from speech; but still
Gazed in mine eyes, where most one reads men right,
Then spake: "Say, wherefore on thy face erewhile
(So may thy great work to good end be brought!)
Did I perceive the lightning of a smile?"

Equally thus on both sides I am caught:
"*Silence!*" my Guide bade, "*Speak!*" implores the shade;
Therefore I sigh; which Virgil understands.
"Answer, then, freely; be thou not afraid
To speak," he said, "but all that he demands
With so much earnestness, at once avow."
Then I: "Perchance thy wonder it did wake
To note my smiling: ancient spirit! now

Thine admiration I would greater make.
He who thus guides mine eyes on high, know thou,
Is Virgil's self! the source whence thou didst take
Thy strength of old for singing those famed lays
Of men and gods. If other cause thou dream
The smile had, drop that error! 't was the praise
Implied in those words thou didst speak of him."

Already kneeling, he had fain embraced
My Teacher's feet, but he said: "Brother, no!
Thou art a shadow, and a shadow see'st."
Then the shade, rising: "Now behold what glow
Of love towards thee my nature still doth warm,
When I forget our emptiness, to throw
Mine arms round thee, as round a living form!"

CANTO THE TWENTY-SECOND.

BEHIND us now the angel had been left
That up to the sixth round the passage shows,
Of one more scar my forehead having reft;
And "*Blessèd are they*" had pronounced of those
Who fix on justice their desire, and they
With answering voices had subjoined "*Who thirst*,"
And nothing further, ending so their lay.
Then I, more light of limb than ever erst
At any pass, went easily above,

Following those rapid spirits with pace the same;
When Virgil thus began discourse: "The love
Which goodness kindleth wakes an answering flame,
Provided that its own flame showeth well.
Hence from that hour when Juvenal, come down
Into the realm of Limbo where we dwell,
Did unto me thy strong affection own,
My love for thee no kindness could excel
That e'er was felt for one to sight unknown;
Brief, then, this climb is, in thy company!
But tell (forgiving me in friendly part
If confidence doth loose the rein too free),
And speak unto me like the friend thou art:
How in thy breast could avarice find a place
'Mid all the varied wisdom that was thine
Of so much diligence the crowning grace?"
Those words did Statius at the first incline
To smile a little, but he soon replied:

"Thine every word I take as love's dear sign.
In truth appearances oft do afford
False matter for conjecture, turned aside
From the true causes hidden or ignored.
Thy question certifies to me that thou,
Misjudging from that round where late I lay,
Think'st that on earth my sin was avarice. Now
Be thou corrected: know I went astray
Far from that vice; its opposite excess

Yea, for a thousand moons, have purged away.
And had I not my wasteful heart in hold,
When I heard thee exclaim in accents dire,
At human nature: 'Cursèd love of gold!
To what of evil dost thou not inspire
The lust of mortals?' I from side to side
Rolling those weights, had felt the terrible tilt!
Then I perceived that hands could spread too wide
Their spendthrift wings; and for the selfsame guilt
Have penance paid, and other sins beside.
How many with clipped locks again shall rise
Because of ignorance, which for wanton waste,
Living or dying, penitence denies!
Learn this: sin which is by one other faced,
Its opposite, with that contrasted sin
Dries its green here, in withering penance placed.
With those that avarice mourn if I have been
Put in purgation, me thereto did bring
The counter-vice that I offended in!"

"Now when of that fell contest thou didst sing,
Which those twin-troubles of Jocasta tried,
From what thou say'st, where Clio touched thy
string,"
The singer of bucolic songs replied,
"Thee to believe not yet, it seems, had won
The faith without which no good deeds avail.
If this be so, what candles or what sun

Dispelled thy night, and made thee trim thy sail
That in the fisher's wake thy bark might run?"
And Statius answered: "Thou didst lead me first
Up to Parnassus, then my way didst light
To God, whilst in its grots I slaked my thirst.
Thou wast like one, that walking in the night,
Himself in darkness, beareth in his hand
A lamp to make the way behind him bright,
When thou didst utter: 'Now begins the grand
New order of the ages; reappears
Justice on earth, and unto men is given
The peace returned of man's primeval years;
Now a new progeny descends from heaven.'
I came through thee to poesy and to Christ!
But let some coloring my sketch enliven,
Lest to thine eye it may not have sufficed.
Already pregnant was the whole world then
With seeds of the true faith so largely sown
By Heaven's eternal messengers to men;
And thy rapt word, which I have touched upon,
From these new preachers seemed to sound anew.
Hence I to visit them an usage formed;
And on my sense their sanctity so grew,
That when Domitian's persecution stormed,
Their griefs with pity did mine eyes bedew;
And oft I succored them while yon I dwelt.
And their chaste customs did mine own so chide
That deep disdain for other sects I felt;

And ere in song I led the Greeks beside
Those Theban streams, I had in baptism knelt;
But long my Christian creed through fear did hide,
And paganism in outward action showed.
My lukewarmness hath kept me pacing more
Than my fourth century, the circling road
Of the fourth terrace. Thee, then, I implore,
(While in ascending there is time to spare),
Thou who didst lift the veil mine eyes before
That kept such blessings from me, tell me where
Cecilius dwells? Terence, our ancient friend?
Plautus and Varro, be they dammed down there?
Tell, if thou know'st, and where their doom they
spend."

"These with myself and Persius," Virgil said,
"And many more, are with that Greek confined
Whom, above all, the fostering Muses fed,
In the first circle of Hell's dungeon blind.
Oft in discourse we mention yet the steep
Where our great nurses evermore abide.
With us Euripides, Anacreon keep,
Simonides, Agatho, many a Greek beside,
Whose brows wore laurels they did justly reap.
There many of thy people may be seen,
Argia, Deiphile, Antigone,
Mournful Ismene with her wonted mien;
The maid who showed Langia's fount, and she

Who called Tiresias father; Thetis there;
There with her sisters Deidamia bides."

Both poets now were silent, coming out,
Free from the passage and its flinty sides,
Once more attent in looking round about;
And now were the four handmaids of the day
Well left behind; the fifth one at the beam
Lifted its bright horn on the upward way,
When my Guide said: "Against this edge extreme
We should, I think, now the right shoulder turn,
Rounding the mountain as we wont to do."
Thus only from our usage did we learn,
And we went forward the less doubting, too,
For the assenting of that soul sincere.
They in advance went on, and I alone
Behind them, to their parley giving ear,
Whence have I drawn what force my song hath shown.

Soon with that pleasant speech did interfere
A tree that in the middle path did rise
With apples grateful both to smell and sight.
And as a fir diminisheth in size
Bough after bough even as it grows in height,
So this tree tapered down in adverse wise;
Lest any one should hope to climb, I think.
And at that side whereon our way was closed,

A limpid stream fell from the rocky brink,
And o'er the leaves above its dews diffused.
Nigh to the tree as the two poets came,
From out the leaves the voice came that of yore
Sounded: "*Of this fruit ye shall never eat!*"
Then added: "*Mary had in thought far more*
To make the marriage honored and complete
Than her own lips, which now for you implore:
And women of old Rome could satisfy
Their thirst with water; Daniel, too, controlled
Desire of meat, and wisdom gained thereby.
That early age was beautiful as gold!
Hunger gave acorns flavor then, and thirst
Made nectar every rivulet that rolled.
Honey and locusts were the food which nursed
The Baptist in the desert where he dwelt;
Hence is he glorious next unto the First,
As in the Evangel plainly may be spelt."

. . . . . .

CANTO THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

OUR going slacked not our talk, our talk our going:
Still we discoursed, and still we strongly sped
Even as a good ship with a good wind blowing.
Now those poor ghosts, who looked like things twice dead,
Through their sad eye-pits drew in wonder of me,
Known for a living creature. But I said,
Pursuing my own speech: "Well may it be
The spirit more slow ascends on our account.
Yet would I ask thee (if thou knowest, oh, tell!)
Where might Piccarda walk along the mount?
And of these many whose eyes upon me dwell
Whether there be some soul noteworthiest?"
"My sister, she so equal good and fair
That I wot not which praise becomes her best,
Goes crowned and joyous in Olympian air!"
To this he added: "Lawfully we may
Name each by name; here our spare diet so
Hath worn our old resemblances away."
His finger showed me: "Buonagiunta, lo!
Buonagiunta of Lucca; and that face
Beyond him there, more sharpened than his own,
The holy Church once held in his embrace.

He was of Tours, and fasting doth atone
Here for Bolsena's eels, Vernaccia's wine."

Others he pointed out, and man by man
As he was called, seemed most content; no sign
Of wrath I saw on any. Hunger-wan,
There Ubaldino champed on nothingness;
And Boniface, that o'er so broad a fold
His crozier raised; that thirstier lord no less
Of Forlì's marquisate, who had of old
Leisure to drink, nor then could get his fill.
As one that scans a crowd, hopes to behold
One only, I forth singled him who still
Intent on me was gazing, him of Lucca.
Somewhat he murmured thickly in his throat
(Justice that strips them hurts there), like
"*Gentucca.*"
"O spirit!" I uttered: "who dost so denote
Desire to speak with me, make me to hear,
And satisfy us both." More clear he spake:
"There is a woman born, nor yet doth wear
The wimple, that to thee shall pleasant make
My city, let men blame it as they can!
Go forward, with this hint not unrequited:
If from my murmuring first thy doubt began,
By truth hereafter that too shall be righted.
Reveal: art thou not maker of that new lay
'*Ladies whose intellect compriseth love*'?"

And I gave answer: "Of me rather say
I am Love's own, and as he breathes, I move;
And ever as he prompts me must I write."

"Brother," he said, "the obstacle is plain
Which forced the Notary, and Guittone, and me
Short of that new perfection to remain.
And how your pen flies following close, I see,
After the god who dictates all you sing;
Which of our own work may not spoken be.
And he that hopes to find a better thing
Cannot discriminate 'twixt style and style."
And here he held his peace, content indeed.

Even as the wintering birds along the Nile
Wheeling in squadrons, that for greater speed
Do separate themselves and go in file,
Thus, with turned faces, all the souls digressed,
Aye faster for their leanness and desire.
As a tired courier, dropped behind the rest,
Lets them pass by, and walks till he respire
More steadily from his spent and heaving chest,
So did Forese suffer his blessèd crew
To flock on, while he lingered at my side,
Asking: "When shall I see thy face anew?"
"My term of life I know not," I replied:
"But howso quick my body back may come,
Heart's longing is here sooner. That ill place

Where I am put to dwell, in daily sum
Loses her worth, and doth to ruin race."

"Ah, go!" he cried. "I seem to see destroyed
Your source of misery, by a furious beast
Dragged at the heels to where all prayer is void,
In the dark valley; still with speed increased
Plunging, till a vile mangled hulk he lies!
These heavenly wheels have no long time to roll"
(And as he spoke he lifted up his eyes),
"Ere of my dark words thou shalt read the whole.
I quit thee; we prize time so, 't is a fault
My pace abreast of thee to have delayed."
As one knight, eager for the first assault,
Forth gallops briskly from the cavalcade,
Straight with his large stride on Forese whirled;
And left me traveling with the twain anon,
Who were such mighty marshals in the world.
And when before us he so far had gone
That my sight followed faintly (as my mind
After the speech obscure I pondered on),
Behold, with laden boughs and living rind
Another apple-tree rose sudden near!
Our glance not being that way till now inclined.
Beneath it did a multitude appear,
Stretching their hands up, with a plaintive cry
Into the foliage, that escaped mine ear.

Like children fain of what they fondly try
To reach, but cannot, begging without meed
To one who, answering nothing, holds on high
The thing that still provokes and cheats their greed,
All disenchanted, did these souls depart.
And we pressed forward to the awful tree
That spurned petition so from many a heart,
Whose branches bred this sound of mystery:
"*Pass: draw no nearer me. That wood grows yonder*
Which felt Eve's kiss; his sapling once was I."
And with both poets hastening close thereunder,
I changed my way. "*Remember!*" rang hard by,
"*The cursed cloud-born ones, with Theseus contending,*
O'ercrammed; the Jews that stopped by Arad's bank,
Lost to their leader, Midianward descending!"
So threading down that border, in a rank,
Heard we of gluttony and glutton's zest,
And the rough pangs that purged that old offending.

Then on the lonely road again abreast
The thousandth step or more we numberèd,
Quietly musing, when upon our course,

"Why go ye three so thoughtful?" something said;
Whereat I shook as shakes a balky horse,
And raised my head to know. Could never be
Blown glass, or molten metal in furnace blast,
So beautiful and bright a red as he!
Who spake: "If ye would climb, here turn at last;
Here lies the path for him in search of peace!"
His presence dazed me; to mine escorts nigh
I faced back, so to give mine eyes release,
Like one who, hearing, can his track descry.

As when, ere daybreak, comes a gust of spring,
A herald with the breath of ferns and flowers,
So on my forehead moved a wind, a wing,
Scattering aroma; then these words in showers:
"*Blessèd are they whom sweetly grace controls,*
Whose reason no brute appetite overpowers,
Who hunger perfectly, with temperate souls!"

CANTO THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

Lo Duca mio dicea: per questo loco.

. . . . . .

My Master said: "Hereby a man must keep
Even the strictest bridle upon his eyes,

Since for so little cause his feet may trip."
Then "*God most merciful!*" I heard arise,
Chanted from that great burning, and became
Smit with desire to turn; and I beheld
A file of spirits walking through the flame,
Whom oft I gazed at, though the while compelled
To heed my steps, my sight dividing so.
Soon as the hymn was done, with loudly blended
Voices they shouted: "*Man I do not know!*"
Then gave, in softer tone, till it was ended,
Their psalm once over; and when they had cried
Thereafter, "Dian to the forest fled,
And drove out Helice, the nymph that tried
Thy poison, Venus!" back to singing sped.
Praising, they called those husbands by their names
Who kept in chastity the ordered road
Of matrimony, and those godly dames.
And this, I deem, is evermore their mode,
Lasting as long as that sharp fire's embrace;
For such their surgery is, and so can deal
With necessary power to efface
That wound of theirs, the last of all to heal.

CANTO THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

WHILE thus we singly by the margin went,
My Master often saying: "Heed thou well

My warning only for thy safety meant,"
Sunlight that on my dexter shoulder fell
Now, spreading forth, had the whole west arrayed
In their own whiteness, blanching all the blue;
And my long shadow with its denseness made
The flare seem ruddier; and that token drew
Many souls passing, an occasion giving
For some so to begin and say of me:
"Surely yon body seems no less than living!"
These towards me then, so nigh as it might be
With due regard to pass not from the blaze,
Approached. "Thou traveler keeping still behind
(Haply from reverence more than habit slow),
Thy comrades twain, give me thine answer kind,
In thirst and bitter burning as I go.
Nor to me only be that answer told:
These others thirst for it, O more than men
Ethiop or Indian, for the water cold!
How makest thou thy body, tell us, then,
A wall unto the sun, as if not yet
Within the mesh of death thyself were caught?"

Thus one of them to me; and I had set
My lips to speak, when a new wonder wrought
Took my mind from them. Rapidly there came
Another people toward us, meeting this
Whom anxiously I watched along the flame,
And ran in haste together for a kiss:

So from two points, dividing in a trice,
In their brown bands do little ants convene,
Heads touching, to find out by that device
What luck 's ahead, and where 's the way unseen.
Suddenly, genial recognitions over,
Ere the first step apart the shadows hie,
Each striveth to outshout his fellow-lover:
"*Sodom, Gomorrah!*" the new-comers cry.

. . . . . .

CANTO THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

As when the first vibration of his beams
Falls where his Maker shed His blood, and o'er
Ebro in Spain high-soaring Libra streams,
And Ganges burns with noonday's heat once more,
So stood the sun, and therefore day was going
When forth God's angel stood upon the shore,
Outside that sea of flame, his visage glowing
With joy, and "*Blessèd are the pure in heart!*"
Chanted in livelier tones than ours had been;
Then: "Go not further till you feel the smart
Of this flame's penance: hallowed souls, pass in!
Give hearing to the hymn beyond," he said,
As we passed near him. At his words I grew
White as a man borne to his burial-bed.

On my clasped hands I braced myself, my view
Fixed on the fire with strong imagining
Of human bodies I had seen consumed.
Then Virgil said, while both good guides, to bring
My courage back, turned towards me: "Here, my
son,
There may be torment, but can be no death:
Remember thee! Remember'st thou what one
Upbore thee safely, when with bated breath
Thou clungst to me when we on Geryon rode?
Consider this: if I could shield thee there,
What should I now do, so much nearer God?
Trust me for certain, and thy fear forbear.
In this flame's womb dwelt thou a thousand years,
It could not rob thee of a single hair!
And lest this truth incredible appears,
Draw near it, if thou fancy I deceive,
And lift thy garment's hem thereto in proof
Of what I say, and make thyself believe.
Now let no longer fear keep thee aloof;
Turn hither, and onward! spirit and footstep free."
I, conscience-smit, yet motionless and cold!
Noting how loath and slow I seemed to be,
Slightly disturbed, he said: "Now, son, behold
This wall separates Beatrice from thee!"
As Pyramus at her beloved name
Lifted his lid, and looked on Thisbe, dying,
What time the mulberry took its hue of flame,

Thus to my wise Lord, softened and complying,
I turned at hearing of the name that while
I breathe, must well up ever in my breast.

"Now then," he said, with crinkled brow, and smile
Upon his face: "What shall we do, my son?
Shall we stay here?" This even as I had been
A little school-boy with an apple won.
Then before me he put himself within
That fire, praying Statius to come last,
Who for long way dividing us had been.
Once in the fire, I could myself have cast
In boiling glass to cool myself! such yearning
I had for a refreshment in some guise,
So unabating was that merciless burning.

To comfort me, my Father sweet and wise
Ever of Beatrice discoursing went,
Saying: "Her eyes! methinks I see those eyes."
Our pilot was a voice to which we lent
Our sole attention, chanting there this lay,
When from the fire we came forth to the ascent:
"*Venite, benedicti Patris mei.*"
It sounded from a light there that so shone
I could not look, but turned mine eyes askance;
While still the voice continued thus: "The sun
Is going; night comes. Pause not, but advance,
While still the west decks not herself with dun."

Straight up the creviced rock we took our way,
Turned eastward, leaving the low sun behind;
Ere many of those steps we could essay,
We saw that wholly had the day declined.
And ere the horizon did on every strand
Through its immensity one aspect wear,
And night dispensed her dark with equal hand,
Each one selected for his bed a stair.
The mountain's nature wholly took from us
Our power to climb, though not our pleasure quite.
Like wild goats, that erewhile go venturous,
Saucy and swift skipping from height to height,
Before their hour of pasture; but remain
Hushed in the shade when day grows fiercely bright,
Watched by the eye of the inactive swain,
Who serves his charge, though resting on his rod;
And as the houseless shepherd all night long
Guardeth his flock outstretched upon the sod,
Lest some wild beast invade the trembling throng;
Even such we three seemed then: myself the flock,
They the calm herdsmen with their careful eyes,
Bound in on both sides by the lofty rock.
Little indeed our reach was of the skies,
But through that little I the stars beheld,
Beyond their wont in splendor and in size.
So musing, fixed on them with gaze compelled,

Sleep seized upon me, sleep that bringeth oft
Tidings of things before the event arrive.

It was, I judge, the hour when there aloft
Our mountain from the east first looked alive
'Neath Venus with love's flame forever glowing,
Lovely and young a lady in my dream
I seemed to see along a meadow going,
Selecting flowers and singing as she went:
"*Know all, if any have desire of knowing,*
That I am Leah, busy with intent
For mine own forehead, with my own white hands,
To make myself a garland as I go,
Roving about among the blossomed lands,
That at my mirror I may please me so.
But for my sister Rachel, she doth move
Never from hers, but sitting all the day,
Looks on her lovely eyes, with them in love,
While rather I with wreaths myself array!
Seeing suits her, but I prize doing more."

Now, through the splendors which precede the dawn,
And look to pilgrims dearer than before
The nearer home they lodge at exile's close,
With routed darkness was my sleep withdrawn,
And seeing my masters had arisen, I rose.
"That pleasant fruit which through so many bough

The search of mortals goes in quest of ever,
This day shall quell thy hungerings." Virgil now
This promise made to me; and surely never
Was regal bounty better than that word!
With such desire still rising on desire,
At every step my spirit was so stirred
Methought that wings were growing to speed me higher.
When all the steps had lightly been o'errun
On the last stair of all his eyes on me
Virgil fixed, saying: "Thou hast seen, my son,
The temporal penance and the fire eterne.
Now in another zone thy feet must be,
Where, of myself, naught further I discern.
Thus far have I with genius and with art
Led thee, but now thy pleasure be thy guide;
Beyond these steep and narrow ways depart!
See on thy brow the sun's resplendent beams,
The herbage see, and flowers and shrubs beside,
Wherewith this mountain lawn spontaneous teems.
Ere those bright eyes whose weeping made me speed
To thine assistance, come with gladness back,
Thou mayst sit down, or wander without heed.
By word or sign of me expect no more;
But with free will explore thine own free track.
So sound and right that is, it were a fault
If thou shouldst trust it not: wherefore thee o'er
Thyself, with crown and mitre I exalt."

CANTO THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

Co' piè ristetti, e con gli occhi passai.

. . . . . .

WITH feet I stopped, but straightway crossed the brook
With eager eyes, much wondering to behold
The great variety of fresh May sprays;
And there appeared to me (as oft is brought
Something to view so sudden, that amaze
Permits no sight beside, nor any thought)
A lonely lady, singing in the brake,
And culling as she went flower after flower
Wherewith her path was painted; and I spake:
"Dear, lovely lady, who thyself must warm
At love's own rays, if I may truthful deem
Love's looks which mostly to the heart conform!
Let thy will move thee to approach the stream
That I may hear the words which thou dost sing.
Thou mak'st me think of Proserpine, what time
Her mother lost her, and she lost the spring."

As turns a dancer slightly in the air,
One of her close feet lifting from the ground,
Hardly advancing, on those flowerets fair
Gold-lined and damask, then she turned her round,
Most like a maid, with downcast eyes, and gave

My prayer contentment; for so near she drew
That I with full sweet sound of every stave
Caught its intent, and all its meaning knew.
Soon as she stood where those fair waters lave
The sylvan grasses, like a gift she threw
On me her lifted eyes. I greatly doubt
If ever any such a splendor shone
Under the lids of Venus when (without
His wonted aim), she suffered from her son.

She on the right bank stood erect, and smiled,
Mingling the manifold colors in her hand
Which that high region yields, unsown and wild.
Three paces only parted either strand;
But Hellespont where Xerxes crossed the strait,
Still to all human pride the barrier,
Had not more heartily Leander's hate
When the broad billows most tumultuous were
'Twixt Sestos and Abydos obdurate,
Than this had mine, for shutting me from her.

"Ye are new-comers here," she thus began,
"And haply wonder at my smiling face
In this high home elected once for man
As human nature's nest and dwelling-place.
But let the psalm '*Thou, Lord, hast made glad*'
Clear with its light your clouded intellect.

And thou who foremost art, if thou wouldst add
To thy late prayer more questioning, expect
Full answer; I came ready to reply."
"The rivulet's flow, the murmuring woodland breeze,
Are battling with my new belief," said I,
"In things I lately heard opposed to these."
She answered: "I the reason will explain
Whence these proceed, and purge the doubts that smite
With so much wonder thy beclouded brain.
The Supreme Good who simply finds delight
In His own being, made man also good,
And upon man this goodly dwelling-place
In earnest of eternal peace bestowed.
Here, through his fault, he lingered not apace,
But changed for tears, and trouble, toil, and woe,
His innocent pleasure and his modest mirth.
Lest any perturbation from below
By exhalations from the sea or earth
Following so far as may be after heat,
Should cause contention 'gainst the race of man,
This mount so high toward heaven exalts its seat,
Exempt from that gate where this realm began."

Since the whole air doth constant circuit make,
From the First Mobile, saving only where
Some obstacle its regular current break,

a

On this great height all open to pure air
Such movement strikes: this makes the wood resound,
So dense its growth, and every stricken stem
With its own grace doth load the breeze around —

. . . . . .

CANTO THE THIRTIETH.

SOON as those luminous images (the seven
Which rise or set ne'er knew, nor cloud, save sin;
The pure septentrion of the highest heaven,
Which unto every one that place within,
His duty taught, even as the one below
Helps every helmsman the right port to win)
Stood still, between them and the Gryphon came
The spirits of truth, then turned them towards the car,
As towards their peace: and one, as with supreme
Commission chanting, shouted thrice afar
"*Come, spouse, from Lebanon!*" and soon the same
The rest repeated, joining in the stave.
Even as the blessèd, at the latest sound
Of summons, each one from his burial-cave
Shall, newly garmented in body, bound
With *Hallelujahs!* thus on that divine

Chariot, at hearing such a sage's words,
An hundred sprang as to a moving shrine,
Angels of life eterne, ministering lords!
They all were saying: "*O benedicte tu*
Qui venis!" ever scattering like the spring
Roses all round, adding, as more they threw:
"*In plenteous hands, oh! store of lilies bring.*"

I have, ere now, at day's beginning seen
Heaven's orient part all of one roseate hue,
And all the rest a beautiful blue serene;
And the sun's face at sunrise from the view
Shaded by vapor, through whose misty screen
His tempered beams the eye long time sustained;
Thus, underneath a falling cloud of flowers,
Which from those angels' hands each moment rained
Into the chariot and around in showers,
Wreathed, over a white veil, with olive crown,
Appeared a woman in a mantle green,
And living flame the color of her gown.
My heart then, which so many a year had been
Free from that former trembling when I saw
Her presence once, that violent surprise
Which overwhelmed me so with love and awe,
Now, without further knowledge of mine eyes,
Through some hid virtue that from her went out,
Felt all the might of that first passion rise!
Soon as that sublime force my vision smote

Which, ere my boyhood's close, had pierced me so,
I turned, with such look as a child might wear
Who to his mother runs in fear or woe,
Toward my left hand, to say to Virgil there,
And would have said (the words to my lips came):
"No dram of blood that in my heart is left
Trembles not now; I feel that old-time flame."
But of his guidance Virgil had bereft
Statius, and me too! Virgil, my Control!
Virgil my Sire, to whom, as loved the most,
For my salvation I had given my soul!
Nor all the joys our ancient mother lost
Could save the cheeks he late had purged with dew
From turning back to darkness and to tears.
"Dante! weep not that Virgil parts from you;
Weep thou not yet; however deep appears
This wound, a sharper sword must pierce thee
through."

From stem to stern, as high an admiral stands
To view the mustered mariners of his fleet,
And give good heart, encouraging all hands,
Hearing my name (which I must needs repeat),
I turned at sound thereof, and saw that dame
Stand on the car's left side, who first was seen
Through festive flowers from angel hands that came,
Bending her eyes with a majestic mien,
On me, who stood on this side of the stream.

Although the veil which from her forehead fell,
Girt by that frondage of Minerva's tree,
Suffered me not to see her features well,
Queenly she looked, and yet upbraided me,
Continuing thus, with sweet restraint of style
As 't were she kept her warmer words behind:
"Behold me well. The one I was erewhile
Good sooth I am: I am thy Beatrice!
So, hast thou deigned then to approach the hill?
Didst thou not know man findeth here his bliss?"
Down dropped mine eyes into the lucid rill;
But seeing myself there, to the greensward near
I turned abashed, and hung my head in shame.
So to the child a mother seems austere
As she to me did; for the taste of blame
Is bitter, sure, if pity grow severe.

She ceased: straightway those angels, in accord,
"*In te speravi, Domine!*" begun
And sang to "*pedes meos;*" no further word.
Like snow whose hard mass, thawless to the sun,
Among the living timbers on the spine
Of Italy, congealed by winds that blow
From the bleak waste beyond Sclavonia's line,
Sinks down into itself with ceaseless flow,
If but a breath come from the shadowless land,
As melts a candle its own flame before;
So, without sighs and tearless, did I stand

Listening their chant whose notes for evermore
Repeat the rhythm of Heaven's eternal spheres:
But when those harmonies gave me to know
Their pitying of me, more than if mine ears
Had caught the words "*Lady, why chide him so?*"
The ice, that had been round my heart comprest,
To spirit and water turned, and with full flow
Of tears and groans, came gushing from my breast.
Then, on the said side of the chariot, she
Standing unmoved, soon afterwards addressed
Thus the bright substances who pitied me:
"Ye hold your watch in Heaven's eternal day,
That night or slumber should not steal from you
One pace of time's march on the ages' way.
Whence to mine answer greater care is due
That he, there weeping, mark the words I say,
And his grief measured be by his defect.
For not alone by those great circles' force
Which to some issue every seed direct,
According to what stars are then in course,
But through divine gifts, largely rained from founts
Of vapor so far hidden from our view
That human vision nowhere near it mounts,
Such was this being, when his life was new,
In virtual grace, that all right training would
Have made in him the wonderfullest proof:
But alway land grows more malign and rude,
Given to bad seed, all husbandry aloof,

The more the soil be vigorous and good!
I with my beauty held him for a space,
And with my young eyes kept his footsteps firm
Mine own to follow in the ways of grace.
Soon as the threshold of its second term
My life had reached, and I my being changed,
Earthly for heavenly, this man wholly gave
Himself to other loves, from mine estranged.
And when from flesh ascending through the grave,
My spirit in grace and goodness was increased
I was less dear, less lovely in his eyes!
Then he to false ways turned, and wholly ceased
Pursuit of real good, but followed lies
That never yet one promise made entire;
Nor did my prayers avail, wherewith I sought
By dreams and otherwise, in him to inspire
Wish to return: he gave so little thought.
So low he sank that every influence fell
Short of salvation; nothing could bestead
Save this, to show him the lost race in Hell.
For this I sought the gateway of the dead,
Till my prayers moved, and many a tear that fell,
One who thus far his upward steps hath led.
God's high decree were violate, should he
Pass over Lethe's river and partake
Its precious beverage, and no reckoning be
Of penitential drops for penance' sake."

CANTO THE THIRTY-FIRST.

"O THOU who stand'st beyond the sacred stream!"
Turning to me the point of her address
Whose indirect cut so severe did seem,
"Say, say if this be true? Thou must confess
And give such grave accusal added force."
In these words Beatrice without delay
Upbraided me, renewing her discourse,
Which so bewildered me my voice gave way,
And spent itself in motion without sound
Before its organ could my will obey.
Waiting awhile, till I mine utterance found,
"Reply to me," she said: "give me thy thought,
Since of the bitter memories in thy mind
Not yet yon rivulet hath effacement wrought."
Fear and confusion in my soul combined
Forced such a faint "Yes," from my lips that sight
Was needful to make plain the assent designed.
As breaks a cross-bow, that from too much strain
Of string and wood lets a weak arrow fly
So that it speeds not to its mark amain,
Thus under that grave burden faltered I;
And my words weakly through their passage flowed,
Broken with gurgling tears and many a sigh.

Still she continued: "Speak; in my desire
That counselled thee to love the only good

Beyond which nothing can exalt us higher,
What chains or bars to check thy better mood
Did'st thou encounter, bringing such despair
To thy weak heart? what profit, what delight
In other objects showing front so fair
That thou to them shouldst yield thy spirit quite?"

After one bitter groan, to make reply
Though my lips labored, I had scarce the might.
"Life's present pleasures," through my tears said I,
"With their false seeming turned my steps aside,
Soon as thy beauty was withdrawn." And she:
"Hadst thou kept silence, or hadst thou denied
What thou hast now confessed, thy fault would be
Known to that Judge from whom is nothing shut!
But down one's cheek when self-accusal flows
The wheel of justice grinds against the cut
In our tribunal. Still, from tears that rose
For thy past error, that thou mayst obtain
The greater good, be strong henceforth to lend
An ear less willing to the sirens' strain.
Put by that seed of sorrow, and attend:
So shalt thou hear to what an opposite course
My body's burial should have prompted thee!
Never did art or nature with such force
Present a rapture to thine eyes like me,
In those fair limbs wherein I bore my breath,
And which are nothing now but dust dispersed.

And if that highest pleasure through my death
So failed thee, how to any second thirst
Couldst thou have been seduced by mortal thing?
Rather shouldst thou, at the first arrow cast,
Through life's illusions with a loftier wing,
Have soared towards me, who had beyond them passed;
Nor shouldst have borne that any trivial girl
Or other vanity whose use lasts not,
At thy spent heart a further blow should hurl!
The half-fledged sparrow takes a second shot,
Or a third haply; for full-feathered birds
No second barb flies, no new net is spread."

As little children at reproving words
Stand blushing dumb, with downcast eyes and head,
Conscious of their own error and contrite,
So was I standing speechless. Then she said:
"If but to hear, thou sufferest such a stroke,
Lift up thy beard, and be more grieved at sight!"

With less resistance is a tough young oak
Torn up by gale of our own natal land,
Or from the kingdom of Iarbas blown,
Than I upraised my chin at her command;
And when for face she asked my beard, well-known
To me the venom was of that rebuke.

And when my lifted visage I had shown,
Mine eye took in the pausing, with one look,
Of those bright angels from that rain of flowers;
And Beatrice above that being mounted
(Though mine eyes trembled doubtful of their
powers),
Which in two natures is one person counted.
Under her veil, beyond the grassy stream,
She seemed to me in beauty to excel
Her former self, more than she seemed supreme
O'er others all when here she used to dwell.
The nettle of repentance gave my breast
So sharp a sting, that whatsoe'er had turned
Me most to loving, I did most detest:
So keen a consciousness my bosom burned
That I fell vanquished. What my state was then
She knows by whose blow I was overthrown!

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CANTO THE THIRTY-THIRD.

"*O God, the heathen are come in!*" began
The heavenly psalmody; by three, by four,
Made sweet response that alternating ran,
Those ladies weeping. Beatrice meanwhile wore
Such look in listening, 'mid her tears and sighing,

That scarce was Mary at the cross changed more.
But soon as those seven damosels complying
With her desire of speaking, mute became
To give her audience, straight uprising, she
Spake thus, the while her coloring grew like flame:
"*A little while and me ye shall not see;*"
And once again: "Beloved sisters mine!
A little while and then you shall see me."
Then at the head of all the seven in line
She moved herself, and motioned us to move,
Myself, that maiden, and the sage who stayed.
Nor do I think that she had pressed above
Her tenth pace forward, when her bright eyes made
Mine quiver, though full tranquilly she said:
"Step thou more quickly, and approach more near,
That should I talk as we together tread,
Thou mayst be posted to distinctly hear."
So when beside her as in duty bound,
I walked, she whispered: "Brother! why hast thou
No subject yet for any question found,
While we are traveling side by side as now?"
As men in speaking to superior men,
For too much reverence, oft no living sound
Can bring to utterance, thus it happened then.
All brokenly did I begin to plead:
"Madonna!" faltering; "what I need," I said,
"Thou knowest, and knowest what will help my need."

And she to me: "From bashfulness and dread
I fain would have thee get thy spirit freed,
Nor speak like one in dreams and drowsihead!

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This tree doth tower with top inverted hence
For cause ungathered of thy sleepy brain;
And were not thy vain fancy's prevalence
Thee round about like Elsa's waters lain,
Doing, with all their dark and pleasant dyes,
As Pyramus to the mulberry, thou wert free
By tokens plain to morally surmise
God's justice in forbidding of that tree!
But since I find thine intellect of stone,
And stained so that my speech but makes thee blind
With its effulgence, take it for thine own,
If written not, yet painted on thy mind,
And bear it with thee as the pilgrim bears,
And for like sign, his staff with palm entwined."

I answered: "Faithful as the wax that wears
Unchanged, the impress of a signet ring,
My mind receives the stamp of thy discourse.
But why beyond me on so lofty a wing
Soars thy loved word, that still the more I force
My soul to keep abreast, the more I miss?"
"That thou mightst know the sort of school," she said,

"Thou hast been following; and perceive by this
How not in footsteps of mine art it trod;
And see, moreover, how that way of thine
Differs from God's way far as from the sod
The circlings of remotest heaven shine."
Whence I to her: "I cannot recollect
That I was ever from thy love beguiled,
Nor is my conscience pricked with that neglect."
"If thou rememberest not," she spoke and smiled,
"Call to thy mind how thou hast drunk to-day
Of Lethe's wave: and if from smoke the fire
Be a just inference, this oblivion may
Give clear conclusion of a weak desire,
Fault of thy will, too much intent elsewhere!
Truly from this time forth my words of light
Shall be uncovered far as it is fair
To show them unto thine unpracticed sight."

While his most dazzling beam with slower pace
Unto the zenith did the sun exalt,
(That point which varies with the gazer's place),
As an outrider cometh to a halt
Seeing some novel object on his track,
The seven maids stopped in pale shade at last,
Such as beneath green leaves and branches black
Upon their cold cascades the Alps do cast.
And there before them, so it seemed to me,
Euphrates river and the Tigris started

Forth of one fountain, like two friends that be
Together long, and loath to be disparted.

"O light, O glory of the human train!
What is this water of one origin
That doth far from itself itself constrain?"
And my petition did this answer win:
"Pray thou Matilda, that she tell thee plain!"
That lovely lady thereupon replied,
As one who fain himself would free from blame:
"This have I told him, and more things beside.
And sure I am yon river's other name
His draught of Lethe hath no power to hide!"
"Haply," said Beatrice, "a graver care
Which often robs us of remembering
Hath darkened his mind's eyes. But look you where
Eunoë floweth from his neighbor spring;
Lead him thereto: and after thy kind use,
With a new life his fainting manhood fill."
Like to a docile soul that scorns excuse,
But straightway makes another's its own will
Soon as made manifest, that lady led
With her light touch, my every weary limb
Full gently forward, and to Statius said,
After a woman's fashion: "Come with him."

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PARADISE.

FRAGMENT OF CANTO THE FIRST.

THE glory of Him who moveth all He made
Shines through the universe with piercing splendor
In one part more, and elsewhere less displayed.
Up in that heaven that most receives His light
I was; and saw things that no mortal being
Coming down thence, could tell, or knows to write,
Because our intellect approaching so
Towards its desire, to such a height is carried
That back the memory hath not power to go.
Truly whatever treasure I could gain
For my remembrance of that holy Kingdom,
Shall make material now for this my strain.
To this last labor, good Apollo! grant
That of thy worth I may be such a vessel
As thou requir'st for thy loved laurel plant.
Till now, one summit was enough for me
Of high Parnassus; now I need the other
To aid me in the task that is to be.
Breathe in my bosom thy notes not of earth,
Such as thou didst when from the piteous scabbard
Of his flayed limbs, thou drewest Marsyas forth!

O divine spirit! so my soul possess
That I the shadow of the blessèd Kingdom
Limned on my brain, may fittingly express,

And then behold me to thy dearest tree
Coming to crown myself with leaves thereunder,
Which my high theme and thou award to me.
So seldom, Father! bard or Cæsar now,
(Oh, of our human will reproach and weakness!)
In triumph goes to pluck them for his brow,
That when a mortal hath on him bestowed
The natural thirst of that Penean frondage,
New joy must thrill the joyous Delphian god!
From a small spark the giant flame is blown:
And others after me, with better voices,
Perchance shall win —

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FRAGMENT OF CANTO THE THIRD.

E quest' altro splendor che ti si mostra.

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"Behold, this other radiant woman here
Showing herself to thee at my right side,
With the full splendor fired of our bright sphere,
Doth even with me my own life's tale divide.
She also was a nun, and from her front
The veil august was torn; when made to dwell
In the rude world, against her wish and wont,
Ne'er from her heart the virginal vesture fell!
This of great Constance is the glory vast,

Who to Suabia's second storm-like man
Bore of those emperors the third and last."
So spake she, and then ceased; but straight began
"*Ave Maria!*" singing: and she passed
Softly as in deep water sinks a weight.

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FRAGMENT OF CANTO THE FIFTH.

Siate, Cristiani, a muovervi più gravi.

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CHRISTIANS! be you more steadfast, more serene.
Fly not like feathers at each puff that blows,
Nor think that every wave will wash you clean,
That any field may serve you for repose.
There is a shepherd and a fold for you;
Ye have a leader when your way is rough;
Ye have the Testament, both old and new:
All these for your salvation are enough.

FRAGMENT OF CANTO THE ELEVENTH.

Intra Tupino, e l' acqua che discende.

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BETWEEN Tupino's wave and that which sends
Its flood from blest Ubaldo's chosen seat,

A fertile mount an airy coast extends,
Wherefrom Perugia feels both cold and heat
Through Porta Sole; and behind it weep
Gualdo and Nocera their grievous yoke.
There, on that side of it where most the steep
In its declivity is sharply broke,
Unto the world another sun was born,
Like this our daily planet, whose glad face
Beams forth from Ganges, bringing Europe's morn.
Therefore let no man speaking of that place
Assisi say, too briefly by that name
Describing it; but let him say the East!
If he would properly enforce its claim.

Not much his light had from its dawn increased,
When he began throughout his land to inspire
Some comfort from a purity so great;
Since, yet a youth, he fought with his own sire
For sake of her against whom pleasure's gate
Men bar, of her face as of death afraid:
And so before his Father, and the court
Spiritual, with her a marriage made,
And grew in love the more they did consort.
She, slighted widow, reft of her first spouse,
More than eleven hundred years remained
Despised, obscure: no lover paid his vows
To her till this one her affection gained;
It nought availed to move men in their choice

To read how Cæsar found her undismayed
With poor Amyclas, hearing his dread voice;
Nor aught availed the courage she displayed,
And the fierce constancy which so sufficed,
That while below heart-broken Mary prayed,
Her lofty spirit climbed the cross with Christ.
But, lest my sense I too obscurely screen,
Take for these lovers of my large discourse
Francis and Poverty : for them I mean.
Their concord and glad looks, the gentle force
Of love and wonder, their demeanor sweet,
Were cause that holy thoughts did much increase;
Bernard first bared his venerable feet
To run behind him, after so great peace,
And in his running felt himself too slow:
O unknown riches! O thou good most true!
After the spouse whose bride enchanteth so,
Egidius bares his feet, Silvester too.

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